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[Information on the bocô or bocor as a diviner will be found in category 791.]

[History of Haiti in 17th–18th centuries — The Haitian white population]

Petit-Goave on 25 June 1743, complains that it is unbeliev- 175
able "what indifference the people of these districts have 185
toward spiritual matters." [66] So little attention was paid to the 181
rites of the Church that when the baptism of an infant was to 771
be performed, it often proved difficult to find a godfather who 563
had taken the sacrament, and many children were therefore [851]
never baptized. As might be expected, the churches were in a
bad state, often having no more than earthen walls and floors,
roofed with thatch, and being used as threshing-floors as well
as places of worship. The description which Père Labat has
given us of a church at Cap Français,[67] and of the manner in
which the communicants conducted themselves during such
services as were held, shows the decadence of the one religion
that had any place among the white inhabitants. The clergy,
too, reflected this same decadence. For though the early liber- [743]
tines who posed as priests were later replaced by members of
such orders as the Jacobins, the Jesuits, and the Capucins, even
this did not end the scandals that, from the first days of the
establishment of the Catholic Church on the island, marked
its ministrations.

What impression must the Negroes have obtained from 17
their opportunities to observe the life of their masters? What 567
patterns of behavior, what moral codes, what concepts of the
way in which the Europeans regulated their own lives and, as
officials, regulated the lives of others, must have been stamped
on the minds of these Africans? That the present emphasis on [181]
the importance of wealth, or that a love of and demand for [369]
display, should characterize Haitian life of the cities today
is not strange. Nor is it difficult to comprehend how certain
other aspects of Haitian life that have so been underscored in
the last half-century by those who have written of the Haitians
should have developed from this initial stimulus — not to the
extent to which this emphasis would lead one to believe, to be
sure, but enough to give a basis for the exaggerations which
have been published.[68]

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"The Mina Negroes have even been seen to recognize princes of their country . . . prostrating themselves at their feet and rendering them that homage whose contrast to the state of servitude to which these princes have been reduced in the colony offers a striking enough instance of the instability of human greatness."[17]

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Yet another group of Africans played a significant role in determining the trends Haitian Negro culture was to take. It is a commonplace among those who have studied New World Negro life that African religion has shown greater resistance to white influence than any other phase of African culture. And to explain this one must again turn to native African tradition. The beginnings of the West African monarchies, whose ruling dynasties eventually came to command great stretches of land, were in tiny principalities that continually "warred" against each other. Tradition has it that the most intransigent of the conquered were the priests of the indigenous local cults, who, because of their activities, were punished with what native idiom still terms "banishment." In the New World these intractable priests continued their rites for their fellow-slaves and instructed the next generation so their knowledge would not be lost to the people. Before their enslavement they had been men of power and influence, and this pattern, carried over in all its strength in the New World, continued them and their descendants as natural leaders. Hence, wherever the opportunity presented itself to strike for liberty, they invoked the spiritual forces to reinforce the power and courage of the military leaders who, like them, had been sold into slavery because their countries had been conquered, or because they had rebelled against the succession in their own lands.

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[869]

The composition of the slave population as inferred from these traditions is thus seen to be somewhat different from

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843 782 539 *malin esprit barré chemin qu'en moment delivrance moin apé' rivé. Nou' toutes Invisibles, les Saints, les Morts, Marassa, vini assisté moin jou'-a.*— I ask you all to come deliver me, that you open the way for me, that you do not allow evil spirits to bar my path when the time of the delivery approaches. May you all, Invisible Beings, the Saints, the Dead, Twins, come to my aid on that day."

843 782 776 Should one of the couple be a devotee of Damballa or Erzilie, both of them jealous gods, a chicken or two is added to the customary offerings, and some gift pleasing to the god, such as a dress or suit of his sacred color, is made him. Normally no further precautions need be taken. 843 789 (793) If, however, the pregnant woman has had one or two miscarriages, she and her husband go to a *vodun* priest, preferably a woman, and obtain a "medicine" to be used in bathing the abdominal and vaginal areas as a precaution against *mauvaises aires,* the werewolves believed to consume children in the womb. 755 793 If the pregnancy this time terminates successfully, some of the same medicine is rubbed on the child shortly after birth and several times during the ensuing weeks, but should the infant later fall ill, the *vodun* priest brings herbs and makes a smoke-fire to drive away the werewolves that are believed still to be hovering about.

844 782 At the onset of labor, if either the father or the mother of the unborn child is vowed to Damballa, another sacrifice is made to this god and to the spirits of twins, giving a *couvert sec* and one or two chickens and pigeons to each. If a *vodun* priest has determined what deity protects the child, a sacrifice is also given this spirit, and prayers are said to the spirits of twins, the dead of the families of both the man and the woman, and all other supernatural beings, saints of the Church and *vodun* gods alike.

844 Meanwhile the woman has been placed on the ground on

a mat or a cloth, supported in a reclining position with pillows 844
and cloths, or on a covered box standing about a foot from the
ground, with her legs drawn up. No fire is built in the house,
all doors and windows are tightly shut, and covers are pro-
vided against a chill. A candle stands lighted at the threshold, [788]
and holy water is poured beside it; a candle is also often [782]
lighted in the church before the statue of the saint who corre-
sponds to the *vodun* deity under whose protection the woman
in labor is thought to be. In the room with her is the midwife
and as many as six, seven, eight, or nine older women belong-
ing to the families of the woman and her husband. The hands
of the woman are made to rest on her knees, but where labor
is prolonged, her arms are supported above her head to afford
relief. She is three times given very hot tea or a drink made of [757)
the stewed leaves of the mango tree and of the *bois lait*. The
midwife, with palm oil on her hands, watches the rhythm of
labor and presses on the abdomen to facilitate delivery.

If it becomes evident that this will be difficult, a *vodun* 845
priest is at once called to determine by divination whether or 793 ●
not the deities who have been propitiated are satisfied. If the 787
answer is a negative one, he promises future sacrifices or gives 782
minor offerings immediately. Care is also taken to ascertain [775)
whether the trouble is due to the discontent of the family
dead who may have been angered by neglect to wear mourn-
ing for them, or because sacrifices or a *service* due them have
been delayed too long. Inquiries are similarly made to deter- [754)
mine whether the spirits of twins might not be displeased,
while the possibility that evil magic may have been invoked is
not overlooked, especially if the husband has several wives. If
the inquiry shows that the magic of a co-wife was responsible,
a strong counter-charm is made at once. Should the woman in 845
labor eventually die, however, her death is not considered to 766
be the result of any act of infidelity on her part, and does not,
as in other Negro cultures, prevent the usual burial and
mourning customs being carried out.

846 or to get her feet wet. When possible, however, she waits for from fifteen to twenty days before doing this kind of work, and, in any event, she will not bathe in cold water until more than a month has passed. A week or two after giving birth she may resume her selling in the market, and two months after her child is born she will take up work in her garden.[3]

852 [851] During this period of the mother's recovery the child is ritually introduced to his world and to the spirits which govern it. Three or four days after the cord drops, the midwife, water and a candle in hand, presents the child to the sun and the four corners of the earth, speaking an invocation which none but women of this profession may know or hear spoken. The child is then carried into the courtyard before the house, though he may not be taken elsewhere for as many as three weeks. When he is taken across the threshold for the first time, he is cradled in the left arm of the one who carries him; in the left hand water is held, while the right hand holds a lighted candle. Water is thrown in three directions, outward from the door and to each side of it, as the child is taken about the outside of the house. This rite is repeated by everyone present at the time, but water is "thrown" only once.

854 789 Though it is said by some that a child is not given a charm immediately after birth unless it is ill, it is nevertheless customary to place a cord about the neck of an infant on the day it is born, to remain there until some three or four years later, when it wears out and is lost. There is no difference of opinion, however, on the point that if a baby falls ill soon after birth, steps must be taken to give it spiritual protection. A [793] [994] *vodun* priest is called to make a charm for it to wear, while, in addition, another charm is placed in the house to guard its inhabitants against "all bad things," such as the evil eye — since this tends to give babies convulsions — demons, werewolves, or the "little folk" who bring bad magic. A *jok* 854 754 against harm resulting from even unconscious envy is also provided, since an individual who admires a baby because of

trance of the house — three times if there is one door (for the 585
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), three times before each door 782
if there are two entrances, and once before each door if there 788
are three. The wedding procession goes to church on foot.
The men, if they are from the countryside, are stiff, uncom-
fortable, and hot in their unaccustomed " best " clothing and
their often painful shoes, while the women are also self-
conscious in their new dresses. The elaborateness of the cere- [202]
mony varies with the fee paid the priest, but at all events
the clanging church bell is heard notifying the town and its
environs that a marriage is being consecrated.

If the family of the bride or groom are well known in
Mirebalais, a wedding reception may be given at their house
for friends of the couple and of their parents, but the real
festivities are held after the return to the new family home.
As the procession approaches it, the " bush-priest," a function- [793]
ary who, because of his knowledge of French, can read the
prayers of the Church, waits at the gate with two aides, small
boys or girls, each with a flag, one red and one white. He has [778]
sacred water in one hand and a lighted candle in the other,
and as he pours this water on the ground three times he in-
tones the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Credo, and other
prayers. These concluded, hymns are sung by all the partici- [533]
pants, and singing, a procession is formed with the " bush-
priest " in the lead, followed by the flag-bearers, the couple
who have just been married, arm in arm, the " godfather "
and " godmother " of the marriage, as the witnesses are called,
the parents of the bride and groom, and other close relatives.
As the procession reaches the door of the house, it pauses and
water is thrown on the ground three times; the circuit of the
house is made twice again, and each time, as the door is
reached, water is thrown, until, the third tour completed, the
participants solemnly enter.

There coffee, liqueurs, wine, *kola*, and cakes are served to 585
the principals and the more important members of the com-

lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god ex- 776
cept Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, 776 [782]
since it is said " the *loa* love desserts " — a commentary on the
very immediate and human character of these spirits.

The actual baptism, or " washing of the head," is per- [793] ●
formed on the third day of the ceremony by a *vodun* priest [596]
or priestess who is a member of the family, though any member who has important *loa* and the necessary *connaissance* may officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest.
As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, [608]
and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or
are themselves twins. The officiant must be possessed at the [787]
time, since, it is said, " one *loa* baptizes another." Leaves of [824]
the basilique tree are steeped in perfumed cold water, and the
hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid; [533]
then, while songs of the *loa* and canticles of the Virgin are
sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. Posses- [787]
sion occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the *loa* to learn if it is satisfied. If an affirmative answer is given, all retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep
through the night. A " ball," but not a *vodun* dance, may [529]
celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly disperse. The following day the one who has been baptized goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely when the *loa bossal* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the *loa*, after having been baptized, is " restrained " by being placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.[18]

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any *vodun* hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no
such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest [793]
there derives his power from *loa* that have never been bap-

[illegible] tized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control them. To have a baptized *loa,* then, merely means that the worship of the *loa* is thereafter carried on in regular form. The worshipper learns how to *marré,* or "tie,"[14] his spirit, so as to enjoy the social aspects of a *vodun* dance without fear [782] that his *loa* will come unbidden. He gives it small offerings from time to time, and if it becomes insistent, or if his family is being troubled by its gods, he takes full part in the rituals that are staged.[15]

787 776 794 In native idiom, a person when possessed is "mounted" by his god, and thereafter becomes his *ch'wal,* or "horse." A devotee may come under the influence of a number of spirits during a single ceremony or dance, one *loa* succeeding another. The first deity that ever came to a person, however, for him constitutes the chief of his gods — his *mait' tête* — and the leader of any deities which may subsequently possess him. [764] It is this *loa* alone that is "baptized," and this one alone "taken from his head" at his death; and, as far as he is concerned, all his other gods are under the control of this *mait' tête,* so that any agreement which he may enter into with this principal spirit must be respected by all the others.

Fundamentally, to be possessed by a *loa* means that an individual's spirit is literally dispossessed by that of the god. Personalities undergo radical change in accordance with the nature of the deity,[16] while even the sex of the one possessed is disregarded if it differs from that of the god, so that, for example, a woman "mounted" by Ogun is always addressed as Papa Ogun.[17] One wears the colors of the god and the ornaments he likes, eating and drinking those things he prefers, and otherwise manifesting his peculiar characteristics — rolling on the earth, if possessed by Damballa or chattering incessantly if by Gede.[18]

787 78[illegible] 794 Not everyone, by any means, is subject to states of possession. If the existence of individual differences in the capacity for religious expression be recognized, it becomes apparent

776 777 for though some gods are feared far more than others, and
some generally regarded with affection, even these latter bring
great harm to a neglectful devotee, while the gods whose
power validates the most malignant magic may, in certain
situations, work for the good of their worshippers. Especially
has there been great confusion in discussions of the so-called
[114] Dom Pédro worship. Whether or not the origin of the term as
given by St. Mery is correct — that it derives from the name
of its founder, a Spanish Negro from Petit-Goâve[22] — the
statements that have been made concerning it are in the main
[782] misleading.[23] Thus, it is not true that the Pétro gods are unqualifiedly evil and the Rada deities unqualifiedly good; nor
that blood sacrifices are made exclusively at Pétro ceremonies,
while the services for other gods are innocent of such sacrificial
776 offerings. The impression gathered in Mirebalais concerning
784 the Pétro gods is that they are principally, though not exclu-
769 sively, derived from the process of deification of powerful ancestors, which in Africa exists in forms that clearly explain the
essential tradition that offers a basis for this custom as found
in Haiti. This is reinforced by statements to the effect that
most of the Pétro "squad" are Créole or native gods as
793 against the Guinée deities in the other groupings. One mem-
794 ber of the *vodun* cult, indeed, made the concept of deifying
776 the powerful dead explicit, saying that Pétro was a great and
769 evil *vodun* priest who had died with the *loa* not "taken from
[775] his head." For while a general principle in the cult of the
dead is that in the normal course of events those who die deliver up their souls to God, making the care for these souls
primarily a concern of the Church, it is recognized that there
are others such as this Dom Pedro who become *loa*. This oc-
[764] curs when an individual, usually a priest or priestess of the
vodun cult, who during his lifetime was known to possess
great supernatural power, dies without having had his *loa*
[775] "withdrawn from his head." Burdened by these spirits, and
therefore unable to get to God, his soul goes to the bottom of

a stream, there to remain until, becoming impatient, it de- 783
mands to be taken out. A ceremony then brings back the tor- 784 776
tured soul and makes of it a "*loa nan canarie*—a *loa* in a 778 775
jar"—which thereafter acts as a guard for its family.

There is little agreement as to the place of residence of the 794
loa. In general, it is believed that they come from Guinée each 776
time they are called, returning when they have, in the native 787
idiom, "descended from the heads of their horses"—that is,
when the possession of their devotees has ceased. Those "under the water," however, being Haitians, remain in Haiti for
seven years until the ceremony just mentioned, of putting
them *nan canarie*, has been performed, when they, like the
other *loa*, return to Guinée. At the same time, all recognize
the African character of the *loa*, whether they be gods brought
from Africa or the Créole *loa* from Haiti itself.

Worship of the *loa* is directed by priests of the cult. The 793
terms *papaloi* and *mamaloi* as designations for male and fe- 776
male priests, almost universally employed by non-Haitian 184
writers, are practically unknown in Mirebalais, where, as in
most regions of Haiti, a priest is called a *hungan*, a priestess
a *mambu*.[29] Besides the *hungan* (or *mambu*), and the *gangan*, 791
a term applied to a *hungan* of renown, is the *bocor*, a practitioner of magic, not a member of any *vodun* priesthood, but
a man who has acquired his power by the purchase of spirits.
He is particularly differentiated from the *hungan* and *mambu* 755
by the fact that the *loa* of their own accord are believed to 768
have given "*connaissance*"—the knowledge of healing and 792
helping, to these latter.[30] Not all gods can endow their devotees (791)
with this *connaissance*. Some of the Rada deities, in addition
to those of the Ogun group who give it, are Legba, Damballa,
Aizan, Bosu, St. Jean, and Agwe Woyo; among the Pétro gods
it is conferred by Bosu Trois Cornes, Simbi d'leau, Gede, Ossange, Malt' Gran' Bois, and Malt' Calfou (Carrefour). Simbi
en Deux Eaux and Simbi Proméné both give magic power, the
former conferring knowledge of excellent protectives against

793 996 755 werewolves as well as of the ingredients to concoct healing baths. Certain priests worship and control a large number of deities, as is shown by those which comprise the personal pantheon of a gangan from the valley of Mirebalais: Gedenibo, Erzilie Gé Rouge; 'Ti Kita Demembré; Simbi en Deux Eaux; Bumba Trois Îlé; Legba; St. Jacques; Ogun Ferraille, Ogun Balandjo, Ogun Ashade; Lemba; Aizan Keleké, Aizan Wedo, Aida Wedo, Damballa Wedo; Baron Samedi, Bosu Trois Cornes; Congo Wangol, Malt' Mapou; Agasu; Agwe, Agweto Woyo; Kadia-Bosu; Sobo Gran'; l'Afrique Guinée. Whatever his ability, the *hungan* can cure only diseases "sent by man" — that is, those caused by magic — and by the *loa*, since against illness sent by God he can do nothing. Gossip [521] disapprovingly whispers how in more than one instance a *hungan* took advantage of his position and the trust of his clients, falsely to represent himself as able to cure an illness "sent by God" through stating it was due to magic.

793 787 An important function of the *hungan* or *mambu* is to foretell the future, and it is as a diviner that the *vodun* priest or priestess is most often employed. No major rite would be considered by a family unless divination were resorted to, but consultation is made for a far wider range of affairs than those of a purely religious nature, and no proposed undertaking of any importance in the secular field is begun without visiting a diviner to discover whether or not the fates are propitious. When divining, the priest is usually under possession by his gods, but other methods, such as gazing into a crystal or basin of water, may also be employed. Several divining séances were visited, but no description of them need be given here, since a number of accounts, including an especially full one by Parsons, are available.[36]

793 184 [755] [787] Though a certain hierarchy seems to exist among the *vodun* priests in other districts of Haiti, in Mirebalais the organization of the cult is informal to an extreme degree.[37] In the minds of the cult members, various priests in the same region

are differentiated according to the types of healing in which 793
they have had the greatest success, and the "miracles" to their 755
credit, such as a *hungan* who had achieved a wide reputation 789
for being able to resuscitate dead children. One *hungan* of the (184)
valley is spoken of as having powers which rank him with
the greatest in the land, but now that he is old, a nephew of
his is being called upon to act in his place. In a relatively
short time, say his friendly clients, he will take his place even
among great *hungans* elsewhere.

Under the *hungan* and *mambu* are assistants called *hunsi*, 794
or sometimes, in the case of men, termed *adjanikon*. In some 184
parts of Haiti, particularly in the plain of the Cul-de-Sac and 789
the southern peninsula, there are degrees of initiation for the
hunsi, which include the ordeal by fire that makes them *hunsi
kanzo*.[20] In Mirebalais, however, the *kanzo* rite, though known
by name, is neither required nor performed. The *hunsi* and
adjanikon know the rituals in a general way, hold and wave
the banners used to salute the gods, sing the songs for the *loa*,
aid in bringing the possessed dancers out of their possessions,
and perform such other ritual tasks as helping the officiating
hungan. Some members of the cult group have special ability
to sing large numbers of the ritual songs for any *loa* which
may be called, while others perform the animal sacrifices. It
is among these male assistants that the most expert drummers
are found.

This, then, constitutes an outline of that system of belief 771
included under the term *vodun*. Once more, in summary, it
may be emphasized that *vodun* is neither the practice of black
magic, nor the unorganized pathological hysteria it is so often
represented to be. The gods are known to their worshippers,
and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The
reward for the performance of these duties is good health,
good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of
belief is erected the ceremonial of worship.

Simple annual rites are held for the gods in January, each 78
family giving small offerings in its house of worship to its own 776
deities. These minor ceremonies are not to be confused with the extended rituals which a family may perform but once in a decade or a generation. Because of the extensive preparation and large outlay these entail, such rites are often postponed from year to year. According to some, this postponement is sought through an *action de grâce*, based on Church ritual, while others maintain that it is but necessary on his special day to appeal to the deity who is troubling the family, give a small offering — a *mangé sec* — and ask for the desired respite. This may be done several times, until crop failures, sud- [793]
den deaths, and the loss of valuable property begin to afflict the [787]
family, whereupon the family head seeks out a *hungan*, who by divination determines the supernatural forces that are responsible for these misfortunes; and when his statement that the gods have reached the end of their patience is confirmed independently by several other priests who are consulted, active preparations for the major rite are finally set in motion.

Any such important ceremony must be held on the ancestral 344
habitation, and centers in the *maison de servitude*, the family 778
house of service for the gods. The house itself, to be differen- 794
tiated from the *humfort*, or "temple" of the *vodun* priest, 78
may be elaborate or simple in accordance with the status of family members in the *vodun* cult.[2] At one end of the sacred house is a platform about two and one half feet high on which [776]
are placed calabash plates for the *loa*, six for the Créole deities, three for the Mystères Guinée, and a white plate with a "thunder stone," or Neolithic celt, and a necklace for Damballa. Not all *cailles mystères* are painted, but some, it is said, [353]
are green "for hope," and some red "for victory," while one [532]
was said to have designs of flowers and snakes painted on the wall above the platform.[3] These houses usually have two rectangular rooms, each with a separate entrance and each having its platform at the narrow end facing the doorway. One of [776]

uals were being performed. If they failed to wave their banners 78
vigorously or often enough, the one in charge chided 79
them for their lack of zeal, whereupon their movements would
become a kind of dance. During the *adoration* each member
of the family was called upon to give coins or candles, the first
for the *prêt' savanne*, though this was not his entire fee.

With the benediction, the *action de grâce* came to an end, 78
and the solemn, tired voice of the *prêt' savanne* was heard intoning 79
a hymn, which, in the usual fashion, was repeated by 533
the assembled group until, without interlude, without even
a pause, the interpolations of the chorus gradually changed, so
that the rhythm became African, and, with the transition, the
vodun priest took over the leadership. The *hungan* began by
repeating several times the phrase which throughout the entire
ceremony was to punctuate all its climaxes, "*Grâce* [*et*]
mise'corde," and the family murmured it in response. He then 78
ordered each member of the family to address himself to the 79
loa, telling what troubles had befallen him and what favors he 776
desired. An assistant now took six candles from the *trône*.
Proceeding in a counter-clockwise direction, he described a
large circle about that part of the meadow where the ceremony
was to take place, fixing a candle in the ground at intervals.
Four of these were for the four corners of the earth, one
was for Mait' 'Bitation — the deity termed Master of the Habitation
— and one for the Mait' Source — the Master of the
Stream. When the members of the family, each holding a
lighted candle, had formed in a line, they were bidden to
place these candles in the earth within the area described by
the six already there, and as they scattered over the sacred
ground, little flickering flames dotted the hillside and the
grassy meadow behind the *trône* in the deepening dusk.

Then all returned to the altar, and the *hungan*, taking the 78
first of three plates made ready for him, began to describe 793
verver. One plate held white cornmeal flour, one was filled 796
with gray ashes, called Guinea flour, and the third contained 632

78 a black powder of ground, roasted coffee beans. Starting at the
● 793 tree near the "first" table for Bosu, he traced a white line
796 that, passing the second table and the trees for Simbi, con-
532 tinued to the *trône*, to which subsidiary motifs were then
added in gray and black, making of the designs an intricate
geometric composition.

78 With bell in hand and a small whistle in his mouth, both of
79 which later were entrusted to his assistants, the *hungan* went
about, blowing the whistle at intervals to call the *loa*. Singing,
[533] he directed that a wooden boat-shaped basin containing water
be placed in front and a little to the left of the *trône* for washing the feet of the sacrificial animals. Though all the family were present, they were again ritually summoned in song to come with the sacrifices and were ordered to stand near by with lighted candles while the animals were bathed. As they gathered, the *hungan* became possessed by Simbi, who took it upon himself to set the fee for conducting this ceremony at 117.10 gourdes. When he announced this sum, loud pleas of poverty were heard from the family, while speaking through the priest, the god bargained with them until the sum of 110 gourdes was finally agreed upon.

[533] The *hungan* now sang a long invocation, inviting the gods
of all those places where Africans live to come. First the feet of
the fowl were washed, then those of the pigs, and finally of the
goat. Each fowl was passed over the body and head of every
[822] member of the family as it was presented with the requisite
song to the proper *loa* — the red and black cock for Legba, the black fowl for Gede, the red one for Ogun, the white for Damballa, and the fowl with ruffled plumage for Congo Zandor. Then each was placed on the ground in front of three small piles of food taken from the *trône*. They were watched with anxiety by all present, for the pecking at the food is a signal that the god accepts the animal given him. The small pigs for 'Ti Kita Demembré, and the boar for Bosu, were offered the same food as the fowls; the goat for Ezilie Gé Rouge was pre-

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will have a place to retire. The *tonnelle,* which is merely a flat brush roof supported by a number of upright posts, must be built strongly enough to withstand the assaults of those possessed, who not only lean heavily on the supports, but sometimes climb through the brush roof to lie for a time on the cross-beams which form the base for this flimsy covering. Its ostensible aim is to protect the participants from what is known as the *neige,* or "snow," as the heavy dew is called, but, as might be expected, the structure has a ceremonial as well as a utilitarian purpose. Of particular importance is the central post, called the *porto cabesse,* or the *porto mita,* because the gods are believed to wait there until their drum rhythms sound, when they use this to descend into the *tonnelle.* The fire which burns during the whole period of the dance near the entrance to the habitation is also characteristic and indispensable. It is for Legba, who, as guardian of the entranceway must first be worshipped, in order that he may permit the other deities to come.

796 The dances may begin shortly after sundown, but are not fully under way until two or three hours later, and last all night. In no case was a dance witnessed which began while there was daylight, though during the dry months, January and February, when there is no work to be done in the fields, dances open at a somewhat earlier hour. The rectangular dancing-space under the *tonnelle* is lined with spectators, who are seated on such chairs and boxes as the family giving the dance can provide or such others as have been brought by their owners, though, in the main, people stand. The vigor of the dance varies as the night progresses. It is usually slow in starting, people drifting in later as they finish their evening meal, while the best drummers are rarely present at the outset. [993] Unless the dance follows an earlier ceremony, such as the baptism of drums, or a *humfort,* the *hungan* in charge also does not appear until a late hour and even when there has been an earlier rite, such a personage may well go to his home to rest before returning for the night's effort.

employed — do not remain with the drummers. These instruments 796
are ordinarily in the hands of *hunsi*, who join the 534
massed ring of dancers that constantly circles about the center [794]
pole. These dancers are not under possession, but are merely
enjoying the evening or participating in the social aspect of
the dance preparatory to becoming possessed. The rattle is 796
held high above the heads of the dancers, and its sharp, steady 633
notes are produced by quick, short, measured movements of
the wrist. The end of a song, which sometimes does not come
until fifteen or twenty minutes after its initial statement, is
usually marked by a continuous shaking of a rattle, a process
which effectually breaks the rhythm and makes it possible to
begin a new song. The player of the rattle is an outstanding
singer, who usually initiates the fresh refrain and continues
to sing its repetitions as soloist in the alternation of solo and
chorus which marks Haitian *vodun* singing as it marks most
West African and New World Negro religious music.

When a possession occurs, the songs for the deity who has 796
"arrived" are taken up as the drums play the rhythm of 787
the god. As his possession comes on, the devotee falls to the
ground, rolling before the drums, or staggers blindly about
the dancing-space, or otherwise follows the characteristic behavior
attributed to his god. After a time he begins to dance, [793]
whereupon a *hunsi* or the *hungan*, taking a calabash of water [794]
in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, dances opposite
him, saluting the god as he performs his every movement in reverse;
if he turns clockwise, the one dancing with him turns
counter-clockwise; if he moves to the right, the other moves to
the left. Except when executing these turns, the functionary
of the cult never takes his eyes from the eyes of the possessed
person, almost, as it were, hypnotizing him to help him come
to himself. Eventually the possessed one recovers sufficiently
to take the candle and the calabash of water in his own hands.
Often spilling water as he moves, he makes his way to the central [982]
pole, pouring an offering and making the sign of the cross [789]
with the candle before it.

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ever, the man was not yet able to hold. Moving backwards toward the *maison de servitude*, all the spectators continued to sing the song of Damballa, while the man to whom the god had come half-danced and was half-carried up the path to the *tonnelle* and taken into the family house of worship.

[788] When he had sufficiently recovered to be able to hold the candle and the water, he poured the water and unsteadily bowed three times in the accepted manner before the *couvert sec* to the Rada gods. He now was enough in control of himself to emerge, and, with the *adjanikon* dancing before him with water and a candle, he once again came into the *tonnelle*, before the drums. As he appeared, the drummers stopped the Ogun rhythm they had been sounding, and in an intense silence all waited for the god to announce himself. Half on his knees before the drums, the one possessed began to sing in a cracked voice:

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Damballa Wedo,	Damballa Wedo,
Papa m' c'est coulev'-o,	Papa, I am a serpent-o,
Na poi' bois	There is no tree
Moin pa' li monté.	I cannot climb.

With this initial statement, the Damballa rhythm rolled from the drums, as all echoed the song in chorused response, while the possessed figure, in strict conformity to the pattern, first poured water at the central post and then consecutively before the iron and each of the drums. Returning to the central post, he whirled about it, almost but never quite falling, until he could dance before the drums, awkwardly but acceptably, before he disappeared to rest in a near-by house.

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The explanation offered by this man of the manner in which he became possessed, and his varying attitudes toward his possession, are revealing. On several previous occasions the *hungan* who officiated at the dance had noticed that he was attending *vodun* rites and had joked with him about his interest in them. Once at an earlier dance this *hungan* had

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given him a piercing glance, not without significance, for as the man, who believed himself the victim of the *hungan's* machinations, said, "Whatever you believe, these *hungans* have some kind of power. . . ." On his arrival at the dance where the possession occurred, the *hungan* had encountered this man sitting alone, some distance from the *tonnelle.* Giving him a drink of liquor, the *hungan,* as he pressed his hand in greeting, sportively turned him about in the manner in which possession is induced. After this the man recollected but little; he did not remember having said he would accept the god, or circling backwards, or bowing to the drums when the "salutes" were played. He dimly remembered having been sent to the *barrière* with some liquor for Bosu, who, not a Rada *loa,* had come unauthorized to one of the spectators and, according to custom, had been removed from the dancing-place. He also just recalled that a woman had become possessed by Legba, but did not know that it was when she touched him that his own possession had begun. The remainder of the night's experience was completely blank, even though the actual state of possession occupied only a small part of it.

Later during the dance, when he had returned, he was heard to say: "It was not a pretty trick that the *hungan* played on me"—a feeling not assuaged when, the next morning at mass, the priest in his sermon preached against following false gods and recounted the miseries in store for those who desert the true faith; nor when he reflected that, by his possession, he had in a sense become affiliated with a group whose position in society was anything but such as to enhance his own social status. The *hungan,* however, promised him that he would not bring on another possession, adding, as an aside: "It is good, though, that a Haitian should have this experience." None the less, to make sure that this *loa bossal* would not come to him at awkward moments, it was going to be necessary for him to baptise it, thus continuing the process which

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796 [354] [187] A candle was attached to a peg of each drum, which, with the lantern that hung near the central post, gave unusually good light. However, as possessions began, the candles on the drums were extinguished as those possessed fell against them, and no more than one could be kept lighted.

793 776 539 796 With the arrival of the *hungan* at about half past nine, the dancing became even more animated, and Ogun "came" as soon as he took over the *manman* drum, but despite this, the *hungan* continued the ritual invocation to call all the *loa:*

Moin rhelé Papa Legba, St. Jo,	I call Papa Legba, St. Joseph,
Moin rhelé Damballa papa,	I call Papa Damballa,
Moin rhelé Papa Damballa, St. Jo,	I call Papa Damballa, St. Joseph,
Moin rhelé Loko Atinsu, St. Jo.	I call Loko Atinsu, St. Joseph.
La vie nan mains Bon Dieu,	Life is in the hands of God,
Seigneur, moin rhelé Ogun Ferraille, St. Jo.	Master, I call Ogun Ferraille, St. Joseph.
Moin rhelé Damballa Wedo,	I call Damballa Wedo,
Moin rhelé Aida Wedo, Seigneur.	I call Aida Wedo, Master.
La vie nan mains Bon Dieu.	Life is in the hands of God.
Moin rhelé Papa Agasu, St. Jo, Dokwe Agwe,	I call Papa Agasu, St. Joseph, Dokwe Agwe,
Moin rhelé Maît' Ouange,	I call Master Ouange,
Moin rhelé Maît' St. Jean,	I call Master St. John,
Moin rhelé Gran' Siligbo,	I call Gran' Siligbo,
Moin rhelé Agwe Woyo,	I call Agwe Woyo,
Moin rhelé Loa 'Bitation,	I call the *loa* of the habitation,

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Moin rhelé Aizan,	I call Aizan,
Moin rhelé Sobo, St. Jo, Dokwe Agwe,	I call Sobo, St. Joseph, Dokwe Agwe,
Moin rhelé Papa Gede,	I call Papa Gede,
Moin rhelé toutes mystères.	I call all the gods.

When he had ended his song a number of the "salutes" 796
were played on the drums, to which all danced backward in 777
circles, ending the figure in bows before the drums, which [793]
were rolling out the call. In the course of the evening a large number of gods were summoned, but, as would be expected, only the *loa* of the family came to this ceremony. Possessions [776]
were observed for Legba, Damballa, Ogun Balandjo, Ogun Galloné, Ogun Ferraille, Gede, and Kadya Bosu. St. John, Osange, Aizan, Ashadé Bokor, Gran' Bosu, Magie, Jean Pétro, Congo, Guinée, Sobo, Bade, and Agwe Woyo, were the *loa* who refused their summons. Though no deity held the center of the stage for too long a time, the evening was notable because it was marked by an unusually large number of Ogun and Damballa possessions, which seemed constantly to alternate. Damballa being the stronger *loa*, his appearance when Ogun was present necessitated the retirement of the latter; but since the possession of Ogun by one woman was particularly persistent, this god returned again and again. As at a [533]
number of dances, the *haut chant* for Ogun Galloné, the French marching-song that salutes the "general," was among the songs heard, when those possessed by the god skipped from one end of the *tonnelle* to the other before the drums.

One particularly striking Damballa possession came on suddenly. As a tall, strong man was seized by the god, he gave a great shout and grasped the beams of the *tonnelle*, disappearing upward through the thatch. For a moment it did not seem that he had climbed on the roof of the *tonnelle*, until a head and arms which appeared between the palm fronds showed he

796 787 [894] was there. To bring him down, a *hunsi* holding water and a candle at once began slowly to dance under him, fixing him with the usual unvarying stare. After some five minutes the candle and water were quickly given to those near by, and in a flash the possessed one was safely on the ground, candle in hand, pouring water before the center pole and the drums, and dancing magnificently.

796 793 787 593 Shortly after midnight the head of the family and his wife returned to the scene of the dance, the explanation given for this return revealing the native conception of the power of the *hungan*. Before his arrival, it was said he had been told of the quarrel; hence on his way to the dance he passed the *barrière* of the house of the family head, though he did not stop to speak with him. Prior to leaving his home, however, he was supposed to have performed a rite which, soon after he began drumming at the dance, so affected the children of the family head that they became possessed and at once ran to the *tonnelle*. Since their children were present, the father and mother were forced to come, and this was followed by a reconciliation of those who had quarreled. To make doubly sure that the *loa* would take no offense, however, another dance which formally ended the *service* was given jointly by all members of the family several weeks later.

796 787 One phase of the ceremonial always encountered, but unusually frequent on this occasion, was the salutation of the assembled company by the *loa*. One woman, possessed by Ogun, greeted all present first by shaking hands with wrists crossed in the customary manner, and then kissing each person on both cheeks. Another, possessed by Ossange, took the neckerchief from about his neck and wiped the faces of all those present, paying particular attention to the drummers. The son of the family head was again possessed by Gede as at the *service*, and his greeting to the assembled company was especially dramatic. His possession took the form of a hysteri-

dead must first count them, he can never accomplish this be- 764
fore daylight. From these precautions, it is evident that for 775
the Haitian the reality of existence after death is no fictional [754]
one, as is even more vividly illustrated in the answer given to [824]
the question whether or not a flute, such as young boys play, would be placed in the coffin of a lad: "What! And have the dead going about all the time blowing it?"[8]

When dressed, the body is placed on a mat or mattress or 764
in a hammock and covered with a clean cloth. A *bande de machoire*, which goes under the chin and over the head to hold the jaw in place, in earlier days, as today in remote sections of the valley, served the double purpose of making possible the identification of a ghost as such, and of keeping the moisture inside the mouth. At present, however, it is usually removed when the body is placed in the coffin. In earlier times also, as today among the peasants in the hills, the nostrils and
ears were plugged with cotton. The body and head are shaved [302]
of all hair, and the finger- and toe-nails clipped; hair and clippings are later placed in the coffin and buried with the body.
The eyes usually close naturally; it is a bad sign if they do not, [826]
indicating, as it does, that magic has caused death. Putrefac- [789]
tion, or any unusual sign connected with death such as when [754]
a cadaver swells, or a body remains warm and perspires, or, as mentioned, when the eyes remain open, is held to be an indication that the soul has been taken by a sorcerer and the person "sold"—all signalling a "bad" death and requiring that a dagger be struck into the body and burial take place immediately.

Some time later, the *prêt' savanne* comes to read prayers if [793] ●
the death has occurred in the countryside, or the priest of the local Catholic church if in the town or near it. After the prayers have been said and relatives and friends have addressed the dead and "given him commissions," such as "Say good-day to my mother," "Ask my father to help us, for the weather has been bad this year for the crops . . ." the body is

always takes place on a Sunday. The prayers of the novena, 765
whatever week-day they may begin, are recited either by the [784
priest, if in town, or by a *prêt' savanne*. The family and a few 793]
friends, who gather to hear the prayers and to sing hymns, take their places about a table covered with a white cloth, on which are placed *images* of the saints, a crucifix, two candles which must burn for the nine days, and two bouquets of flowers. A lamp of oil in a glass with a floating wick must also burn day and night. Each session of the novena lasts some two hours, and no refreshments are served those who attend.

On the day of the *dernière prière* those invited come to help cover the walls of the room with white sheets — sometimes the ceiling is also covered — and hang white curtains over doors and windows. Wreaths are placed on the table and attached to the sheets on the walls, and *images* of the saints are pinned to the white table-cloth as it hangs down. Liquor, cakes, *kola*, *clairin* and other refreshments are made ready, according to the family means, these being held so essential that if the family lacks the funds at the moment to provide them, the novena may be stopped on the eighth day, and the
dernière prière postponed for a month or even two. The same [533]
type of song is sung at this rite as at wakes, and the mourners wail once again, though not so loudly as just after the occurrence of death. At about eleven o'clock, after having recited the last prayer of the novena, a *libera* is sung to "drive the dead from the house," since now they are through with him
— followed by an *adoration* for the *prêt' savanne*. Since, un- [773
like the custom at vodun ceremonies, these coins are his entire 146]
fee for the novena as well as for this evening's ceremony, he sees to it that the song which marks it continues until all members of the family have donated a sum that he regards adequate. The *adoration* over, the refreshments are passed, so that the *dernière prière* most often ends at midnight, though those in attendance sometimes remain until morning, playing games, telling stories, and singing canticles as at wakes.

The family then take the other container to a crossroad, where it is deposited as an offering for Legba, and its contents are eaten by the dogs, who significantly, in Dahomey are the animals sacred to this deity. Following this, the adults enter the closed room, to feast at the laden table. [769 782]

Several days after the funeral two gourdes are paid a priest — "a real one," not a *prêt' savanne* — to chant a *libera* at the grave, a rite that must be repeated each year on All Saints' Day. Each year, also, food is given the dead, though "not so much as following a funeral." Chickens, beans, rice, and coffee are the principal part of such an offering, for which no priest need be called, as the ceremony is merely to let the dead know that they are not forgotten. Every three or five years, however, a large *mangé* must be given for all the family dead, and if held on the family habitation, there is social dancing, where such favorites of the ancestors as the *martinique*, the *banda*, the *calebasse*, and the *zeze* are danced.* [773 765] [535]

Differences in procedure mark various modes of death. 766 When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no "last prayer," because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated. Those killed by lightning or who die of smallpox are not mourned, but no explanation could be obtained for this obvious survival of African custom. If a leper has concealed his disease, mourning is worn for him, though if the cause of death is generally known this is forgone. There is customarily no mourning for suicides, and never where the regulations of the Church are rigorously applied. [171] [762]

If the dead person was a vodun priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance*, steps are taken before his death to "remove the *loa* from his head" so that his soul will not go under the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause their family much harm 764 766 773 775

764 766 if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is
776 not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar.
775 The *hungan* who performs the rite of removing these *loa* is
764 preferably himself a member of the family and is usually left
766 alone with one or two assistants and an elderly relative of the
776 dead, but if the family includes no *hungan,* the one who is
793 called, even though greatly trusted, is most carefully watched,
because a strange priest might take for himself the valued gods of the dead, leaving only the weak ones. The *hungan* stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, with which the *loa* is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be " given " to a successor.

766 No special purification is needed for a house where death
[764] has occurred except when the deceased was tubercular or a
[786] leper, when everything except his money is buried or thrown
in some unfrequented place. The body of one who has died of smallpox, though washed, is buried as soon after death as possible without being enclosed in a coffin. Those who die of smallpox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard, the lepers and victims of smallpox being separated from the others, for the Church declares these have died of the plague. One who drowns is buried at the riverside where his body is recovered, though if the corpse is not too badly decomposed, the authorities give permission, and the family of the dead can afford the expense of
[561] transportation, the body may be brought home. Children are
buried in the cemetery, but, on the principle that " the young
[771] must serve their elders," the funeral of a child is attended only by those relations who are younger than the dead; for in Haiti, as in Africa, it is not held seemly that the young should be followed to the grave by their elders. At the house, however,

789 from its ill effects after the evil has been exorcised, must also
know the forces they are combating if they are to achieve any
789 measure of success. By the same token, practitioners of black
791 magic must know what steps may be taken to counteract their
● 793 wangas so that, if necessary, they can in turn call forth super-
754 natural emissaries to strengthen the evil impulses originally
756 set in motion. In this sense, therefore, the *hungan*, the *gan-
gan*, the *bocor*, and the *caplata* employ essentially the same
techniques and operate with the same forces, the difference be-
tween them being one of degree rather than of kind. "*Hun-
gan, c'est magazin. Gaigné un pile marchandise* — The *hun-
[538] gan* is like a shop. He has a lot of merchandise," says the
Haitian, quoting a well-known proverb as he makes the point.

In the main, it can be said that though the *hungan* and the
gangan practice magic, their main preoccupation is with the
loa — the maladies they send to affect a man and his posses-
sions — while the *bocor* is concerned almost exclusively with
setting in motion the agents that actuate black magic, and the
789 *caplata* dabbles in anything that is wanted. One important
776 means whereby the sorcerer obtains his powers is the evil *loa*,
791 but there is this essential difference between them: the gods
793 of the *hungan* are family gods who come to him through the
754 natural course of inheritance, endowing him with the *connais-
756 sance* that gives him his control over the supernatural world,
425 while the *bocor* buys his gods. And when a god is bought, it
is always acquired so as to enhance the position of its owner at
all costs, despite the knowledge that the power thus purchased
is dearly bought, bringing its own eventual punishment.
Sometimes an ambitious *hungan* adds to his familial *loa* other
"purchased" gods, but this is resented by the deities who have
given him his powers, so that in time these benevolent powers
take all means to humble and crush him. Furthermore, gods
acquired in this way pass on to unwilling members of their
owner's family and, after a generation or two of mischief-
000 making, must be "restrained" or "banished." A number of

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789 793 754 791 *points* — or oblique designations — makes clear the distinction between the two, for the *bocor* invariably and certain *hungans* on occasion are called *nèg' mazi maza*, "Negro who wears his back to the front," or, again, those who "serve with both hands." Though by no means shunning the services of the practitioner, the Haitians of Mirebalais nevertheless look upon the working of magic with a cynicism that is reflected in the gossip about happenings that befall all who practice it, in any form, and particularly those who work evil magic. It is said: "The *hungan* often dies an evil death, and the *bocor* who makes *wanga* almost always. These people kill each other by magic"; or one hears of a woman who one day went to the cemetery to obtain materials needed for her unsavory work and was struck and killed by the thunderbolts which are believed to smite sorcerers.

789 756 793 To keep his reputation, a practitioner of magic, good or evil, must make continual demonstration of his powers. For example, in prescribing a magical cure, it is incumbent upon the *hungan* or *mambu* to foresee all eventualities, even where the directions are not followed, a prescription which is regarded as a strong check on the charlatan and is the reason why a practitioner is prudent in refusing to accept a case beyond his power to aid, since persistent failure to achieve cures will lose a *hungan* his reputation and his practice. Naturally, certain practitioners do not fail on occasion to turn the anxiety of a family over a serious illness to their own account, but inasmuch as the cures made by a man are the most adequate proof of his power, the feeling is that his clients have an unquestioned safeguard against chicanery. This point of view, it may be noted, is of undoubted importance in perpetuating a living faith in magic.

558 793 685 An example of how rapidly a practitioner of magic can lose prestige when some mishap occurs to him was encountered when an important *gangan* of the valley was brought into court charged with the theft of a pig which he claimed was

558 793 685 given him by a third party for whom he had done what was euphemistically called "a piece of work." The evidence clearly showed that the animal, which he had killed to feed a *combite*, had been stolen, and since this *gangan* could not establish his defense that he was an innocent receiver of stolen goods, he was convicted and sentenced to three months in prison, and to pay the owner of the pig the exorbitant sum—sixty-five gourdes—asked as damages. Sympathy was very generally with the *gangan*, but the opinion most often heard expressed was that his power had obviously been lessened by his misuse of the *connaissance* the gods had given him, or they would not have permitted even his arrest, much less his conviction. To reinforce the point, specific reference was repeatedly made to the *hungan* most popular in the valley at the time, about whom it was said that, for example, were he accused before a court, the officers might even enter his house in search of him while he was present, but they would still be unable to see that he was before them.

793 435 554 Other attitudes held toward workers of magic developed in connection with this case. The popular *hungan* was often called on, it was said, because his work was well done and his fees were not too high; it was pointed out that there were renowned *vodun* priests who charged five hundred gourdes for a *service* which this man directed effectively for but little over one hundred; moreover, such men often failed to remove the evil deities which were troubling the family that employed them, but would instead add more, so that their clients would soon have need of them again. 793 435 776 784 Practices such as these, especially that of overcharging, are frowned upon by the *loa*, and if persisted in they "spoil" the power of the priest. This was one of the reasons why, in the opinion of many individuals, the *gangan* in question had been convicted. "He was once a remarkable *gangan*, but he has spoiled his *loa* by using them for evil, and by asking too much money for what he was employed

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to do. The *loa* would come, but they wouldn't give him the same *connaissance*."

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One of the most important of the forces behind all magic is the *Mait' Carrefour*, the Master of the Crossroads. The possible identity of this *loa* with Legba, who guards the entrance to houses and is also thought of as a guardian of the highways, was a question that could not be satisfactorily resolved, though it seems most likely that the two are quite distinct, since Legba is but rarely called upon when magic is being performed. One Haitian versed in magic stated:

> "The *Mait' Carrefour* is like the president. Legba is like a minister. God sent the *Mait' Carrefour*. He commands Baron Samedi. Before going to the cemetery to perform [black] magic you must pass the crossroads, and therefore he is able to restrain you if he is not properly worshipped. He commands Damballa. He commands the Rada and Pétro gods. He commands all the saints because all of these must pass the crossroads. Therefore when one has a *garde carrefour*, a person will die a death sent by God [that is, a natural death] and not one caused by *magic or the mystères*."

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The *Mait' Carrefour* must be "paid" each year on All Saints' Day, when seven cents in copper coins are given and a white chicken is killed, cooked, and placed in a wooden container with rice, biscuits, cassava, potatoes, bananas, and other kinds of food, both cooked and uncooked, to be deposited at a crossroad with the statement: "Here is food; thank you for having cared for me. If evil *loa* wish to harm me, *Mait' Carrefour*, restrain them." As this is said, a candle is lighted and an invocation pronounced:

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> "*Au nom de Mait' Carrefou'; au nom de Mait' Grand Bois; au nom de Baron Cimitière! Jodia, premier la*

789 [788] person of great experience was pointed out who was believed able to stop a runaway horse without putting a finger on him. One widely spread type of charm is an *arrêt* against the *mal jòk*, or evil eye. Mention has been made of protective charms when the measures taken to guard growing crops were discussed, and also in connection with safeguarding the well-being of infants. The power in this latter type of *garde* often is made to reside in a seed on a string or chain, or a cross of beads sewed on cloth, to represent the four corners of the earth.

789 793 Because charms are the outer symbols of magic, detailed examples of their making will give insight into the nature of [829 789 954] charms in general. The first of these which may be described was a *garde*, made by a *mambu*, to relieve a pregnant woman whose milk had begun to flow before the birth of her child — a sign that an evil spirit had been sent her by an enemy, and that her delivery would therefore be fraught with danger. [787] During the séance the *mambu* was continuously possessed by her god, Ogun, whose identity was shown by her whistling. Before the *mambu* as she commenced her incantation were some *clairin*, lighted red candles, a new piece of soap, incense, sulphur, garlic, light brown shoemaker's thread, an empty bottle, a bottle filled with a green, evil-smelling lotion called *baigne de mambu*, a chick, and three iron nails. As she tied the cord in knots she muttered her spell; then, taking the empty bottle, she put in it a bit of the incense, sulphur, garlic, some soap, some *clairin*, and some *baigne de mambu*. With the knotted cord she tied a cross made of two nails to the neck of the bottle, repeating her formula before she put it down. Instructing the pregnant woman to take the bottle, she said: "Speak into it and say everything you wish."

[825] She then took the chick, opened its beak, and wrote on it with a pencil, continuing the incantation the while. With the pencil she also made marks on the thighs, the wings, the upper joints, and the leg joints before she handed it to her client

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with the words: "Tell it what you have to say. Tell it that you are passing on to it all your pain, everything." When she had finished, the *mambu* once again took the chick, holding its head as she described three crosses on the ground with its beak. She now put some of the earth in which she had made the crosses into a white dish, returning the chick to the woman and telling her to speak to it again, and this time to expectorate three times into its open beak as she finished. 789 793 The *mambu*, holding the fowl in one hand, thereupon poured some of the mixture from the bottle, and some *clairin*, in the plate that contained the earth, lighting the *clairin* with her free hand and directing the patient to rub her nipples with it. Then she returned the bottle to the pregnant woman, telling her to recount her need to it once more, and then to cork it.

The *mambu* next chewed some of the soap and rubbed it over the cork to "seal" the bottle, saying: "When you send a letter through the mail, you seal it," and instructed the pregnant woman to place the bottle in her house and see to it that it was not uncorked, for in it was contained her life and the life of her child. "Open it before delivery and pass its contents over your abdomen." A cord was put about the waist of the woman and tied tightly, not to be untied until the growing child in her womb should cause it to break of itself. While the *garde* was being made the *mambu* sang this song: [533] [539]

M' pas 'ti bête,	I am not a little animal,
M' pas 'ti cochon,	I am not a little pig,
Pou' on coué,	That one can confine me,
Pou' on marré moin.	That one can tie me up.
Ça qui fait bien,	He who does good,
Cé bien li wé;	Good he will see;
Çà qui fait mal,	He who does evil,
Cé mal li wé.	Evil he will see.
Côté marré corde moin,	Where I tie my cord,
Yo passe la qui li.	They are stronger than it [the evil?].

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Novo, Dahomey. The members are, of course, not known, but there is always gossip, and occasionally a man, when quarreling, says: "Take care! You don't know who I am. . . ."

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Baka, *loups-garous*, and *démons* are not the only supernatural beings that a person may encounter from time to time. Though not all are creatures of magic, and not all are evil, all of them are treated with due caution. Such are the "river
● [793]
people" — children with six fingers, who are believed to belong to the Malt' Source, the Master of the Stream, and are destined to become *hungans* — this being an example of the good that may come from such supernatural association — or persons with light hair. Those with light hair are more dangerous, however, since occasionally such folk are taken for a time under the water, the men by female spirits and the women by males. One person in Mirebalais told of a distant cousin who disappeared as she went to the river to draw water. She was mourned as dead, but returned after a year and was welcomed home. As she began to recount her adventures, however, she was struck dumb, and never recovered her speech. Another spoke of his experience as a boy with such a water-spirit, a *Maîtresse d'Eaux*. With a companion, he was walking along the bank of the Tombe River, when a woman was seen sitting on a rock combing her long light-colored hair. The other lad was invited to help her and went nearer, step by step, until, as he almost touched the comb, he turned and ran. Some time later he died.

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Another category of spirits, already referred to in discussing the cult of the dead, are *zombi*. To understand their nature, however, the use of magic to bring about death or its simulacre, and the measures taken to guard against this, must be first considered. In the preceding chapter it was observed how *koboli* seeds are placed in the coffin of one suspected of an "unnatural" death to prevent the sorcerer from reaping the
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fruits of his deed. A cross of pine-wood, made by the *hungan* and empowered by him to repel evil, is frequently also put

009 754 he is accidentally fed salt. Though the concept has been pre-
775 sented in recent years with unjustifiable sensationalism to the
reading public,[15] it is indisputably a living one. One aspect of
775 it has been responsible for much of the conviction with which
754 positive statements are made of personal knowledge of can-
266 nibalism in Haiti, as has been shown most clearly by Dr.
114 Parsons:

> [993] "A *ganga* who keeps a *zombi* may transform him into a stone, perhaps in front of his house, or into any kind of animal. Transforming him into a pig or sheep or cow, he may kill him and sell him in the market. In this belief we have the basis of the gossip and court testimony about human flesh sold in the market. It is *zombi* flesh, not human flesh, that is so disposed of. But foreigners know nothing about *zombi,* nor do the native witnesses explain in court what they have in mind when they are testifying to purchases of meat from the cemetery. 'People does *eat* people at Aux Cayes, I *know* it,' said Sam, as he told of human fingernails found on pigs' feet, explaining *to my question* that the pig had been a *zombi*. Had I not followed up his first statement and learned that he had never heard of anybody killed directly for marketing, an idea which amazed him at that, I would certainly have been left with an impression of cannibalism totally misleading."[16]

775 Precisely the same concept exists in Mirebalais as in Jacmel, where the foregoing material was collected, except that in its elaboration it underscores the point made in the quotation just given. *Zombi* meat can be recognized by the fact that it rapidly spoils, and when cooked, brings much white foam to the top of the stew, while such meat, sold as beef, turns white like veal; all this warns against eating it, and shows the active [776] distaste with which it is regarded. Indeed, one of the duties of a person's *loa* is said to be that of warning him when he is

352 177 European straight chair, and if peasants often sleep on mats laid on the ground in African fashion, this is only because
342 their resources do not permit them the luxury of beds. The accessory field-house is called an *ajupa*, a designation which represents one of the few recognizable contributions of the aboriginal inhabitants of the island to its present-day culture, since, according to Charlevoix,[3] it was first applied to the huts of the buccaneers, called by them *aioupas*, a name taken over from the Spaniards, who themselves had adapted it from the native Indian term.

291 Clothing is also of European style. The men, who wear
177 shirt and trousers, long ago discarded the West African loincloth and the covering great-cloth worn toga-fashion, while the hats they wear are of course equally of European type. The absence of shoes, though characteristic of Africa, is not necessarily of significance, for shoes are not only an accepted article of dress, but are symbols of worldliness, and when lacking from the costume, indicate only an inability to purchase them. The dress of women is no less European, though only the old women continue the fashions of the days of St. John, who reported that "the females generally keep to a long white chemise, covered over with a blue cotton dress that reaches to their bare feet, and is drawn in around the waist."[4] As in his time, white is favored for days of festivity, and the head-kerchief is also seen, even if it is less omnipresent than in his day. The younger women who count themselves sophisticated scorn the kerchiefs and wear hats, but elderly women wind white kerchiefs about their heads in the West
● [793] African manner. The invariable mark of the *mambu*, in addition to her jeweled fingers, is the white kerchief with a very large straw hat worn over it.

292 One special form of dress that represents a complex merging
177 of European and African secular and religious customs is the
796 *rade de pénitence*. For men this takes the form of a multicolored shirt, for women a dress whose colors are dictated by

[777 771 784 788 778] the saints of the Church the sacrament of baptism was a crucial rite, so the *loa* must be baptized before they become forces which act in a recognized and predictable manner. Just as the objects used in the rituals of the Church must be sanctified by being blessed and sprinkled with holy water, so in the *vodun* cult a *humfort*, the drums, the iron, and the rattle must all undergo a similar sanctification, not only that they may possess proper supernatural power, but more importantly that they may perform their functions in the very serious and African matter of calling the *loa* and placating the supernatural beings of the *vodun* cult.

[779 793 794 788] Herein lies the importance of the *prêt' savanne*. Since the official representatives of the Church not only have nothing to do with the *vodun* cult, but excoriate it on all occasions, the *prêt' savanne*, as a man who can read the prayers of the Church, plays an indispensable role and to that extent is to be regarded as a functioning member of the *vodun* cult, despite the fact that he has no control over the *loa* and, as far as was observed, does not participate actively in their worship. At the same time, it must not be inferred that in borrowing "baptism" from the Church this rite has been elevated to the most important place in the ritual of the *vodun* cult, for though the *prêt' savanne* must read prayers "from the book" and sprinkle his holy water, the actual "baptizing" is carried out by the *hungan*. [778] In sanctifying a *humfort*, the end in view is to induce the *loa* to come after the baptism and to insure that no unaccountable or untoward deeds may come to pass within it. Similarly, though drums must be baptized with Church prayers and holy water that they may perform their allotted tasks, without the concomitant ritual of the *hungan* they would be no more empowered to call the gods than they were before the prayers of the Church were read over them. An analogous comparison can be made between the role of the *prêt' savanne* and that of the *hungan* in the *service*. Since the world is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of His Church before the rites to placate the *loa* may begin. But the important business of the occasion is to placate the *loa*, and it is only when the *hungan* takes over from the *prêt' savanne* that the series of rituals commence which, for the Haitian, hold emotional force and psychological value. 177 793 794 788

In the description of the baptism of a *loa* given in a preceding chapter, the use of Church ritual in bringing the African spirits under control will be remembered. No clearer illustration can be given of this merging of traditions than in a detailed account of the manner of making and validating *vodun* drums. These drums are of the characteristic African hollow-log type, with skin heads held in place and tuned by means of pegs, which are tied fast about the drumhead with cord. Before the tree which furnished the bodies was cut, an invocation was pronounced by their maker and an offering—a *mangé sec*—was made, that all the gods might come when called by the finished drums. A candle was lighted and *vervet* described about the base of the tree. Eggs, broken against the trunk, were rubbed on the bark; while both soft and alcoholic drinks were given as libations, since not all the gods desire the same refreshment. After the tree had been felled and that part of the trunk that was needed for the drums was cut off, the maker was free to proceed with shaping the bodies of the drums by first gouging out the inside of the trunk, then stripping the bark, and finally carving the characteristic foot at the base. Before the next step of boring the holes for the pegs was taken, *clairin* was poured inside each drum, at the entrance to the habitation of the maker, and toward the man's cornfield. The first hole bored in each drum was carefully marked, for this was the significant *mamman*. Here the first peg is inserted; the skin head is first attached here; and here the cord about the head is first knotted; while it is the peg in this hole that must always be first struck when the completed drum is tuned. 534 782 788 778 [177) [322) cade for Damballa, a red print for Ogun, and a third, a flowered blue material, for all the other gods, were first made. They were ruffled at the bottom, with strips of the material, attached as are apron-strings, to hold them in place. Four eggs, 534 778 788 [292] three "native" candles, three white candles, white flour, corn flour, two cassava cakes, two biscuits, three small-sized loaves of bread, two bottles of *kola*, *clairin*, and holy water, were also provided for the baptism. Finally on the appointed day — a Saturday, so that the drums could afterwards be used for a *vodun* dance — the drums, drumsticks, and iron, with the dresses and the food that had been provided for the ceremony, were taken to the scene of the rite, a habitation where a *tonnelle* had been built for the accompanying dance.

The ceremony began at about five o'clock in the afternoon, [608] the drums being dressed by their godmothers. Just as a child who is to be baptized in church must have godparents, so drums must have their godparents, and following the logic of this position, since the owner of the drums is regarded as their father, he uses the terms *compère* and *commère* for those who have "stood up" with his drums, just as he would for those who might sponsor his children. The *prêt' savanne* first [993] called for some twigs from an orange tree and a bit of cotton, as the drums, standing on end, were covered with a clean white cloth. Grouped about them and ranged behind the officiant were the owner and godparents of the drums, holding lighted candles in their hands, with which they made the sign of the cross from time to time. As the prayers began, the participants crossed themselves, and the *prêt' savanne* sprinkled the drums with holy water, using a spray of orange-leaves. Among his prayers were the Credo, the Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, and the Salve, interspersed with hymns sung by the assembled group. After about half an hour of prayer the officiant, holding an egg in his hand, made the sign of the cross three times over each of the drumheads. Ordinarily the eggs would have been broken, their contents rubbed on the drum-

534 778 788 heads, and *clairin* poured over these, but on this occasion the rite was postponed, for the eggs would have dampened the drumheads so they could not have been played for the evening's dance. Yet this deviation from the strict ritual did not permit any laxity in meeting the obligation when promised — that is, the day following the dance.

534 778 788 793 The *hungan* took charge as soon as the prayers were finished. Placing the drums to form a triangle on the ground, with the iron, rattles, and sticks near by, he put the offerings inside the space enclosed by the bodies, and with white cornmeal made *vever* about them, while at the foot of each drum he placed an egg; then, covering the drums with a clean cloth, he threw parched corn on it. From time to time he interrupted his silent invocations by ringing a bell held in one hand, until the arrival of the time for the vehement haggling over the price of his services, which interrupted the ritual. [552] This matter settled, he asked for the names to be given the drums, and proceeded to "christen" the small one Gran' Siligbo, the middle-sized Damballa, and the great drum Ogun Shango. At this point, were the owner desirous of having special powers given his drums, as is frequently the case, the *hungan* would endow them with a *n'âme*, or soul, at the same time instructing the spirit of the drums, called *huntòr*, in what was desired of it, and prescribing what must be given the drums by their owner to make their powers effective. But in this case no such *n'âme* was asked, and the ceremony continued.

Summoning the gods, he lifted the cloth over the drums and instructed the "father" to pour water in three places between them, to set the drums on end, and to beat one of them. This was the *seconde*, called Damballa, and its having been initially struck indicated that the god after whom it was named was most important for this set. 534 778 788 This ended the ceremony of baptism, and the drummers took charge so that the evening's dance might begin, for now the drums were ready

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ABOVE, Consecrating the drums: the " godfathers " and " godmothers " standing by with lighted candles as prayers of the Church are recited.

BELOW, The vodun priest employing African rites to complete the consecration of the drums.

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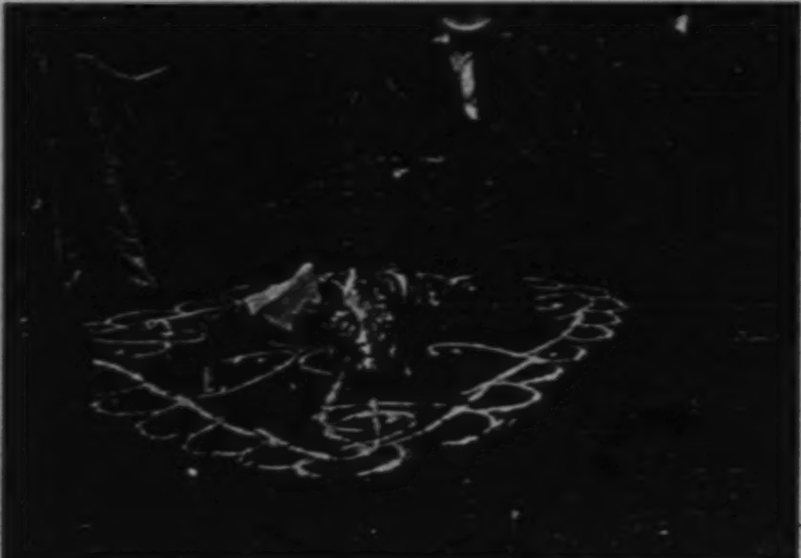

[facing p. 282]

792 778 the voduists this is not regarded as decisive proof of the power of Protestantism, for those immediately concerned it is held sufficient.”

771 177 What, then, of the attitudes held by voduists toward the Catholic Church? The correlation of Catholic ritual with *vodun* practice made by Haitians is of utmost significance in this connection. In discussing the Church service, it was pointed out that church bells announce mass or any other rite, and this, it was explained, is for Legba — “*Toute cloche c'est pou' Legba, même l'église, oui* — All sounding of bells is for Legba, even in church,” for he must be notified so that he can “open the gate” for God, Jesus Christ, and the saints. “*Nou' même nou' connai' ça. C'est Bon Dieu crée tout* — You yourself know that. It is God who created everything.” It was also recounted how when the priest preaches, he is possessed by the *mystères* of the sacred Trinity, for does he not gesticulate and become excited like any other possessed person?

Furthermore, it is believed that Gede, Ogun, and Damballa “are always at the church,” often insisting that their worshippers take communion. Indeed, occasionally the *loa* of a woman may demand a Church marriage from a man to whom she is a *placée*. The sacraments of baptism, first communion, marriage, confession, and extreme unction are received by members of the *vodun* cult, though, as will be seen, when voduists
● [793 788] confess, they say nothing of their *loa*. The *hungans* themselves “are most often at the sacred table to take communion,” and one particular *hungan* not only attended mass, but was seen continually employing his rosary in the *vodun* cere-
[184 793] monies at which he officiated. While Haitians from the southern peninsula stated that the *hungans* there do not go to church, it was pointed out at the same time that all other voduists attend regularly.

779 798 The principal resentment held by Mirebalais voduists against the Church is for the cost of Church rites, and for the

[P. 308 is blank]

APPENDIX I

THE GODS OF THE VODUN PANTHEON

ONE of the most impressive facts about studies of Haitian peasant belief is the absence of any attempt at systematic treatment of the deities of the *vodun* cult, as concerns either their attributes, their functions, or their relationship to one another. Indeed, there are but two exceptions to this statement; Dorsainvil (I, pp. 174–5) has published a list of the names of gods, placing them in categories according to their African derivations, and Parsons (I, *passim*) has made available her notes on the characteristics of the deities of which she was told while working in the island. Otherwise, one reads merely of "the serpent-god Damballa," or of "Papa Ogun," or some other isolated designation. It therefore seemed of capital importance in making this study to obtain both names of deities and as much information concerning these gods as possible, and the resulting data are presented here. 776 114 [P21]

One reason why perhaps not more of such "systematic theology" of *vodun* as exists has been made available is the great degree of individual variation which confronts the student seeking this kind of information, since differences of opinion are invariably encountered. Even priests do not by any means agree, for these men and women are supreme individualists, each being the worshipper of particular deities and exploiting special skills, with the result that the frame of reference within 776 184 794 [793]

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which a given priest operates differs from that of his colleagues—though, of course, always within the limitations set by the general pattern of the cult.

This range of opinion cannot be better illustrated than by giving, at the outset, three of the lists of *vodun* deities that were obtained, since here only so simple a matter is involved as names of gods. These lists, it must be remarked, were given by people living in the same valley; were they to be compared with lists collected from other parts of the island even greater disparities would appear, as will be evident if the collection of names of *loa* given by Dorsainvil is consulted. Certain deities, whose names recur below and are also to be found in Dorsainvil's list and in Parsons' notes would be included in any enumeration of gods of the cult, since their worship prevails throughout Haiti. Such would be Legba, Damballa, Aida Wedo, Aizan, Ogun, Agwe, Loko, Shango, Ouange, Bosu, Simbi, Wangol, Baron Samedi, Gede, and Ezilie. Others, though not enjoying as widespread a following, are worshipped over large areas. A number, however, either are gods that have resulted from the process of deifying the souls of those who, in a given locality, were renowned for their spiritual power, or represent survivals of regional African deities that have been preserved in certain large family groups.

Turning now to the lists themselves, the first of these was obtained from a woman functionary of the cult. A single asterisk after a name indicates that its exact counterpart is found in the second list presented here, while two asterisks show the precise name was included in the third listing.

Rada	*Pétro*
Damballa Wedo**	Pétro
Aizan Damballa**	Bosu Trois Cornes*
Aida Wedo	Bosu Djo
Ogun Galloné	Gedeonsu*
Ogun Ferraille* **	'Ti Kita Demembré*
Ogun Balandjo* **	'Ti Jean pié sèche*

I: Herskovits 8-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

view from that given here.

[illegible] Parsons (I), 171, describes how she witnessed a woman "refuse the visitation of her *loa*."

[illegible] Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the "*obligations annuelles de participer par un acte quelconque aux sacrifices cultuels* . . ." laid on the vodunist.

[illegible] St. Mery, i, 51; see also Dorsainvil (I), 46.

[illegible] Seabrook's description of a "Pétro" ceremony (pp. 31 ff.) deserves, on the basis of its inner inconsistencies, to be considered a masterpiece of misstatement and misinterpretation. Its effect, and the effect of others like it, have done much to perpetuate this incorrect idea of the Pétro rites.

[illegible] Dorsainvil, Price-Mars, and Parsons all employ these terms, rather than *papaloi* and *mamaloi*, the designations found in more popular books such as those of Craige, Seabrook, and Wirkus. The latter two of these writers seem confused about these words and fail to make it clear whether or not they mean the same or different functionaries of the vodun cult when they use the words *houngan* and *papaloi*. [114] [189]

[illegible] Compare Dorsainvil (I), 73–7 and 121, where he expresses a low opinion of the *hungan*, holding him unreliable and insincere in his worship, as contrasted to the *vrai serviteur*. [193] ●

[illegible] Op. cit., 175–9.

[illegible] Even though followers of the vodun cult are more organized in some parts of Haiti than in Mirebalais, it is arrant nonsense to speak of a "supreme high priestess" of the cult, its *grande mamaloi*, as does Seabrook, 117, or of a "black pope of voodoo" as Wirkus has done (in *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 168, pp. 38–49, 188–98; December 1933–January 1934). [114] [194] [114] [114]

[illegible] A sober statement of the degrees of initiation into the cult (although these do not hold for Mirebalais) is to be found in Dorsainvil (I), 168–9, and also 62. [194]

CHAPTER IX

[1] Price-Mars (I), 144, gives a long and excellent list of the reasons for offering sacrifices.

[2] A description of a *humfort* destroyed by the Marines during their occupation, and a detailed account of its

Vodoun is clearly more than ritual of the cult temple. It is an integrated 771
system of concepts concerning human behavior, the relation of mankind
to those who have lived before, and to the natural and supernatural forces
of the universe. It relates the living to the dead and to those not yet born.
It "explains" unpredictable events by showing them to be consistent with
established principles. In short, it is a true religion which attempts to tie
the unknown to the known and thus create order where chaos existed
before.

As in Dahomey, it is not a system imposed from above but one which 771
pushes out from below. It is bred and nurtured in the family, in the towns, 793
and in the fields. It is common law, with deep roots in an unbroken and 794
continuous past. The priests of Vodoun do not control it and direct its 776
course. They, like the least fortunate peasant, simply move about within
it and make use of its resources. They are its servants and its interpeters.
In their cult centers, the principles of Vodoun are brought into sharp focus
and dramatized. Vodoun is democratic in concept. Any man or woman
may have direct contact with the deities or dead ancestors without the
intervention of the cult priest. There is no place or situation beyond the
influence of the loa or beyond the limits of Vodoun. At every crossroads is
the spirit of the crossroads guardian, Legba, and on every long trail is the
spirit of the Master of the Highway.

The cult priest nevertheless plays a significant and essential role. He 793
translates beliefs that otherwise might tend to become amorphous into 182
formalized action. He is a teacher, a repository of cult learning, and a
vital catalyst. He gives form to abstraction, and practical meaning to symbols.
He is the intellectualizing agency of a tremendous emotional force.
Through his knowledge of the substance and forms of Vodoun, his experience
in dealing with the loa, and in some instances his capacity to
set magical forces into action, the cult priest is a dynamic power within
his community.

Though the making of *pouins* and *magie* (ritual magic) and *ouangas* 793
(aggressive magic directed against individuals) is within the realm of the 789
cult priest's activities, these things are part of Vodoun only in a subsidiary 754
sense. Magic lurks on the periphery of Vodoun. It has little or no place 771
in the placating of the deities or the dead. It concerns the relationship of
the living with each other and with *lou-garos* (*loups-garous*) and *bakas*
(demons). Although cult rituals include various pouin and magic ceremonies,
the cult priest draws upon magic as he draws upon other mystic
arts and fields of learning—leaf doctoring, divination, Catholic ritual, and
Masonic symbolism. He attempts to bring together all thinking that
widens the scope of Vodoun, in order to strengthen his hand to deal with

789 771 793 783 754 all aspects of the natural and supernatural. But the reputable cult priest does not dabble in "black" magic—the kind that maims or destroys human beings. One who does so is said to "work with two hands": one for the loa and one for evil. (The expression *servi dé main*—"serving with two hands"—is also applied to a cult chief who deals with deities of more than one "nation.") Many a cult priest in making his ritual floor drawings on the earth holds his left hand behind his back and draws with his right, giving testimony that he "works with one hand" only.

793 794 775 [346] Each cult priest maintains his own cult temple, or *hounfor*. There are no cult officials above him, as there is no formal religious organization beyond the hounfor itself. Within his own special community he is therefore the chief religious functionary, the apex of an intratemple social organization. Under the cult priest, ordinarily, there are two grades of assistants, and below them two classes of servitors.

793 787 171 791 The cult priest is usually referred to as a *houngan*, a Fon (Dahomean) title signifying "spirit chief." Sometimes he is called *gangan* (a Bantu word meaning "conjuror" or "doctor")[2] or *cepla*. He also is known by the title *bocô* or *bocor*, which seems to be derived from *bocono*, the diviner or priest of the Dahomean Fa cult.[3] The bocor is, in fact, sometimes referred to as a *divineur*, and he is regarded by some Haitians as a clairvoyant and a practitioner of magic. As in Dahomey, the bocor in Haiti foretells fate through the throwing of shells or chips, much in the manner of the secular game *mayamba*. He also reads destiny with small sticks or ashes. In earlier days the cult priest was sometimes known by the Yoruba name *babalao*, a title which has been corrupted to *papaloi*. A female cult leader is known as a *mambo*. She is presumed to have, in a general way, [562] the same powers as the houngan, though in some quarters her *connaissance*, or "understanding," is not regarded so highly, and her status is believed to be somewhat lower.

794 Directly under the houngan is his chief assistant, the *laplace*, and perhaps a little below him on the ladder, the *mambo caille*. The laplace is regarded as the vice-houngan, and he assumes responsibility for running the hounfor in the absence of his chief. The mambo caille, a woman, runs the cult center in the absence of both the houngan and the laplace. One step farther down the ladder is the *houngénicon*, who acts as a sort of chief of the main body of devotees. These high-ranking assistants to the houngan are sometimes called *badjicans*, or keepers of the altar.

[171] The servitors of the cult are known as *hounsi*, or "spirit wives," a name that was given to certain categories of cult servants in Dahomey.[4] There are two main groups of hounsi: *kanzo* (those who have passed through a ritual fire test) and *bossale* (those whose loa are wild or untamed). The

[2] [Footnote appears on p. 349, Category 116.--Analyst]

[3] [Gorer, Africa Dances, p. 129; Herskovits, Dahomey, I, 208 ff. Cf. p. 349, Category 116. --Analyst]

[4] [Footnote appears on p. 349, Category 116.--Analyst]

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loa makes his appearance in Vodoun ritual by possessing ("mounting") 794
one or more of the participants. When these possessions first occur, the 787
possessed persons lapse into a kind of frenzy without controls or direction. 776
They may stagger, fall, and go into convulsions. The deity must be controlled so that he will not harm the person whose body he takes over. The [793]
houngan eventually establishes a conditioned, formalized response to possession; and once this is achieved, the loa is regarded as having been tamed.
The *hounsi bossale* then becomes eligible for elevation to the status of 794
kanzo. The term *kanzo* means "to tie fire"; that is, to conquer or show mastery over fire. Demonstrations of supremacy of possessed persons over flames, hot coals, and red-hot metal characterize many Vodoun rituals. In the kanzo ritual the initiate must undergo the test of boiling oil.

The hierarchy of the cult temple, in general, looks like this: 794 [793]

Houngan (or *Mambo*)—chief of the hounfor
Laplace—first assistant to the houngan
Mambo caille—"mistress of the house"
Hounguénicon—topman of all the hounsi
Hounsi kanzo—the highest grade of hounsi
Hounsi bossale—the lowest grade of hounsi

Among the hounsi there are some who have special duties or functions. There is the *reine silence*, for example, whose job is to maintain order. The one assigned to cook the various sacrifices is called the *hounsi cuisinière*, and so on.

There is no single, clear-cut process for becoming a Vodoun priest. A 793
man with special talents may rise from the rank of hounsi and eventually become a houngan by succession. Or a person with a strong *connaissance* may simply feel the call—sometimes in a dream—and establish himself as a houngan or bocor. If such a man demonstrates that he is "strong," a following will gather around him to constitute his *société*.

When a houngan dies, his cult center may be abandoned, or it may be taken over by another established houngan or by the deceased man's protégé. Frequently the laplace will inherit the cult temple and all that goes with it. Acquisition of a cult center by inheritance is looked upon as a means of keeping an established hounfor intact. The man who wishes to achieve the rank of houngan applies to the oldest and most venerable cult priest in the district and announces that he wishes to receive the *asson* (the ritual rattle) that is, to become a houngan. If the elder priest approves and wishes to sponsor the younger man's elevation, he consults other reputable houngans and arranges for a *grand service* for purification and investiture. The elder cult priest conducts the ceremonies. He is regarded as especially wise because of his age and long experience in dealing with the loa, whose

793 [769] [783] approval of the candidate's elevation is needed. He is also regarded as being on more intimate terms with the family ancestors who, likewise, must be in accord with the proceedings. The candidate for the asson is confined within the hounfor for a number of days, during which he takes purification baths and participates in other rituals. The rites that take place during this period are prescribed by the elder priest who has assumed responsibility. When the purification is ended, the candidate emerges into the *peristyle* (roofed court) to participate in the general service, and to undergo further tests.

Present during the ceremonies are all the principal houngans of the region—men who will be friendly associates of the new priest or, possibly, unfriendly competitors. The candidate is tested on his knowledge [789] of how to use the asson and the tiny hand bell, and in the course of the service he is mounted by the loa who is the chief protector of the cult temple. [782] Animals are sacrificed, and all the loa sacred to the hounfor are invoked and asked for their approval and support. But it is not only the loa [794] and the dead who must indicate their approval. The elder houngan polls the hounsi kanzo on whether they will accept their new cult chief and follow him. [533] He also asks the chief drummer, who polls his assistant drummers. It is taken for granted that the decision is in the hands of the hounsi. The consensus is known before the actual service, but the formality of asking the question is observed. Should the hounsi refuse to accept the candidate for the asson, the elevation cannot take place.

793 554 62 [791] The city and the countryside contain many self-styled houngans and bocors who are not recognized as bona fide by the community, regardless of the route by which they claim to have achieved their station. Sometimes they are regarded as *pas fort* (not strong); that is, they do not have profound knowledge and understanding. The Haitian is quick to detect the difference between a houngan who knows and one who does not know. Many are stated to be outright fakes. One man who attempted to hold a service in Port-au-Prince aroused such contempt and disgust that a number of persons who had been drawn by genuine interest walked out with remarks that the man should be punished. In fact, his failure to show any [533] essential qualifications for the houngan's role was commented upon in a song of ridicule that made its appearance at a secular dance that same night. The song noted some of the humorous aspects of the service, such as when the "impostor" struck himself vigorously on the head with the flat of a machete to show his "strength" and virtually incapacitated himself for the rest of the evening.

346 It is easily observed that no two hounfors are exactly alike. They differ

782 In Haiti the possession takes many forms, according to the nature of the deity who has entered the body, and depending on whether the possessed person has learned to "control" that deity. The possessing, or "mounting," of the possessed individual is manifest proof of the loa's existence and his constant proximity. [771] [776] Vodoun is built upon the premise of the existence of loa, and the possession is the instrument of direct contact and of constant proof of the loa's imminence.

771 177 776 Although much of Vodoun is cast in the Dahomean mold, it is no longer what it was originally in Dahomey. Many of the original deities of the Dahomean Earth pantheon, the Sky pantheon, and the Thunder pantheon have survived. Others have been forgotten, but in their place there has grown a vast array of loa, recruited partly from the Yoruba deities and perhaps from deities of other West African tribes. By far the largest group has come into existence in Haiti—loa whose names, at least, probably would go unrecognized in West Africa.

177 779 771 776 There have been prolific intrusions into Vodoun from the rites of the Catholic Church, though they have not affected the general framework of the system. The original Dahomean supreme being, Nananbuluku, is nearly forgotten; in her place the Christian God is named in many a Vodoun service. Yet, though God is the supreme creator, giver, and taker, it 771 793 797 177 175 is the loa who must be supplicated and mollified. Most important Vodoun rituals are begun under the supervision of the *prêt' savane,* or "bush priest," who leads off with brief prayers from the Catholic rites. While the Catholic Church itself rejects any direct part in Vodoun, the self-tutored prêt' savane, unordained and unsponsored by the Church, brings elements of its theology into the hounfor. The origins of the prêt' savane are not clear. But there is little doubt that his place in Haitian life became assured during the years of conflict between postrevolutionary governments and the Church of Rome. After the slave revolts of 1791, the priests of the French colony fled from the scene or went into hiding along with the other white colonists. From the date of Haitian independence throughout the following half century, Haiti was "in open schism from the Roman Catholic Church."[1] Some Haitian presidents were friendly toward the Catholic Church; others even had the objective of making Catholicism a state religion with the president at its head. [659] Henry Christophe, for example, made the Catholic Church official but stipulated that ecclesiastical decrees must be approved by the president. Alexandre Pétion's constitution for southern Haiti (the country was divided) also established the Church as official but laid upon it strong restrictions.

175 659 793 Leyburn points out that in 1814 there were in Christophe's kingdom only three priests, one of whom Christophe had named archbishop. Dur-

[1 Leyburn, The Haitian People, p. 119. Cf. p. 349, Category 116. -- Analyst]

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ing Boyer's administration, 1818–1843, Catholicism was the state religion but the president was its chief. Leyburn notes:

> Every effort of the state failing to provide proper religious leadership, Boyer resigned himself to permitting those who professed to be priests to practice in the republic. There were seventy so-called priests in the country in 1840. Some of them had once been in the holy orders but had been unfrocked: they found in Haiti not only a haven but a fertile field for gain. In addition to these religious renegades came adventurers who knew just enough of ritual and theology to use the priestly garb as a cover for easy graft. . . . They baptized houses, boats, and doorposts, and blessed fetish charms or amulets, all for a fee.[8]

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It was not until 1860, after the death of the "Emperor" Soulouque, that Haiti signed a concordat with the Roman Church.

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The role of the prêt' savane became defined after the slave revolts of 1791. His cue was taken from the activities of freebooting Europeans who apparently needed neither religious orders nor profound Catholic knowledge for their pseudo-clerical work. And the long period without a responsible priesthood gave the "bush priest" an opportunity to flourish.

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The prêt' savane of today has a respected place in the community, though his prestige is not so great as that of the houngan on the one hand or the Catholic priest on the other. His place is guaranteed by his ability to bring to the Vodoun service elements of a competing system which the houngan, operating within the framework of African tradition, does not provide. Acceptance of these Catholic elements as a peripheral part of Vodoun is characteristic of much West African religious thinking, in which new deities and rituals may be added to the old when circumstances require.

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The prêt' savane opens many Vodoun services with an *action de grâce*, reads prayers when a death has occurred, participates in marriage rites, and "baptizes" the hounfor, the cult drums, and the sacred rattles—not to mention the loa themselves! But it is the houngan's powers that are paramount. The "bush priest" is in a sense performing a service for the Vodoun priest, whose rituals and administrations are regarded as the effective and vital ones. The prêt' savane is a cultural afterthought.

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In certain remote and isolated mountain places the prêt' savane is virtually unknown. But there is no sense of deprivation, for the cult priests —even the poorest and the most rustic—have their own way of dealing with the saints, God, and the forces of nature. An aged houngan of the Morne la Selle region explained it this way:

"In everything that is done, God's permission is asked first. Most houngans in the mountains do not know how to read, and they don't know how to pray. But they know many things. They know where the sun rises, They know where the sun rises,

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and they address St. Nicholas, who opens the day, and they know the wish of God. In the name of St. Nicholas they raise a glass of water and ask God for the power to do."

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In ordinary usage the Haitian refers to the various cults or "nations" as though they were quite separate and mutually exclusive. He speaks of the *service* Pétro, or *rite* Nago, or the *nanchon* Ibo. Yet in practice the cults are usually bound together into two or three major groups.

The "nations" belonging to the Vodoun (or Dahomey) group include the Arada or Dahomé, the Anago, the Mahi, the Amine, and the Ibo. There is ample evidence that the cults of these "nations" were once separate and apart. Even today in isolated regions of Haiti there are cult centers devoted exclusively to Nago deities. Elsewhere, Mahi or Ibo services are held without the intrusion of "foreign" rites and deities. Some cult centers have several hounfors—one for Dahomé, one for Nago, one for Ibo, and so on, with a separate building for the "dead" spirit Gèdé. More often, however, one finds a single hounfor containing separate altars. Of all the "nations" within the Vodoun group, the Ibo perhaps has the most independent status, and in some regions it is tied in with Pétro rather than Vodoun rites.

The Pétro group also includes numerous "nations," some completely absorbed, others more loosely affiliated. Within this group, which for convenience may be called the Congo-Guinée family, are the Pétro, Bumba, Moundongue, Bambarra, Congo Louangue (Loango), and other "nations." In certain regions the Congo cult, like the Ibo, is regarded as separate and apart. Sometimes the Pétro service is kept distinct from the others, though it has drawn so heavily on them for its roster of deities that the distinction is not easily seen. In places such as Port-au-Prince where the cults have deeply infiltrated one another, major differences between the Vodoun and Congo-Guinée rites have disappeared, and altars to both Pétro and Dahomé deities may be found within the same hounfor.

It is not difficult to detect a certain pattern of regional grouping within the Vodoun and Congo-Guinée families. Within the Vodoun family are gathered "nations" from Dahomey, Togoland, and Nigeria, while in the Congo-Guinée cycle are "nations" from Central Africa, miscellaneous "nations" such as the Bambarra, and the Pétro cult which is regarded as "Haitian" rather than "African," but whose rites and loa have been recruited in large measure from other services.

One often hears of Kitta services, or Chango services, or Legba rites. These are not separate cults but simply rituals for specific loa.

776 they say, and "rides" them. What the possessed persons do then depends
787 upon the personality and whim of the loa. Generally they take on the special personal characteristics of the loa. Their voices and manners change and their postures and attitudes undergo transfiguration. They may talk about the "island below the water," about community ancestors, about intimate affairs of the community, or about how things are going back in Africa. Sometimes they utter words or phrases recognized as "African language." And on occasion possessed persons talking *langage* are said to be speaking Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, or Spanish. At the moment of first impact, when the loa enter their heads, they stagger, jerk, and tremble, often falling on the ground. Then, soon afterward, their behavior begins to move in a groove of conventionalized activity.

[346] Most commonly the loa arrive during religious rituals or dances. They
come by way of the *po'teau mitan,* the center pole which supports the roof
[178] of the peristyle. It is around this pole that the sacred vèvès, or flour draw-
[182] ings, are made. At the foot of the pole sacrifices are offered and libations are poured.

787 Yet possession may occur anywhere and at any time. The sound of a
773 certain drumbeat may be the signal for it, or a sudden fright, or an emo-
[533] tional crisis, or any situation to which possession has been conditioned. The houngan or the mambo may facilitate possession, control it, and terminate it. The cult priest is acutely sensitive to the conditions favorable to possession. He knows how to heighten emotional tension and how to soften it. A competent houngan "plays" his service as though it were a delicate instrument. He takes everything in, issues instructions to his servitors from time to time, orders the drum tempo increased or diminished, knows how to change pace. Sometimes he hovers in the background unobtrusively, encouraging the singing and dancing like a benevolent father. At other times he comes to the center of the activities and takes command. He becomes the focus of all eyes. His slightest action is watched with intensity. He may take the hand of one of the servitors, pirouette him about, and compel the loa to enter. When the servitor is "mounted," the houngan may conduct him through ritual activity. At the right moment the houngan may help the loa to leave.

776 The spectators who observe possession in others are usually aware of the
787 identity of the loa who has entered. When the ancient loa Damballa Wèdo comes in, his "horse" falls to the ground, wriggles like a snake, and makes what are considered to be snakelike sounds in his throat. For Damballa is the venerable deity identified with the rainbow, which in ancient Dahomean lore was thought to be the great serpent come out from the underworld to drink after a rain. When the loa Ogoun Chango enters,

The loa, like the rites, vary somewhat according to region and to the practices of the individual cult priests. New concepts spring up, and they thrive in one locality while remaining unheard of in another. Yet many new concepts travel from hounfor to hounfor. As in the old days in Dahomey, the Vodoun priests sometimes make journeys to visit other cult centers. At one service near Jacmel, on the south coast, I met a houngan from Dondon in the far north and heard him discuss with the local cult chief the appropriate behavior of a loa who had mounted a servitor. The Dondon houngan declared that in the north the loa conducted himself differently. The Jacmel houngan parried with the remark that a loa's behavior is consistent. He said there were only two possibilities concerning the possession as described by the cult chief from Dondon: either the loa had been mistakenly identified, or another deity had attempted to impersonate him. Such exchanges hasten the spread of developing theology from one area to another. They also raise contradictions which remain forever insoluble. 776 184 793 794 787

That confusions and contradictions are not merely of Haitian making is made clear by Herskovits' voluminous study of the pantheons of Dahomey.[3] Each of the great cults—the sky cult, the earth cult, and the thunder cult—has its own explanations of the origins and functions of the deities; and even within one cult there are contradicting explanations. The Haitians have taken over, built upon, and diverged from a Dahomean system that contained its own contradictions. In adding to it the system of the Yoruba, with its parallelisms and similarities, they have made the whole picture more complex than ever. 114 794 177

[3] [Herskovits, Dahomey. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

with the corpse. He wants nothing to do with the domain of the Gèdés. 775
He liberates himself from the corpse at the cemetery and retires "below the 776
water." He is no longer a friend and benefactor of the family. He cannot 764
be inherited by the children of the deceased. Such controls as the deceased once exercised over him are dissipated. He may, in fact, be angered at the treatment he has received and return only to harass the family. Thus, if a family fails to have the mait' tête of one of its members properly removed at death, it may be persecuted afterward by the "spirit" of the dead ancestor and the loa as well.

The rite of dispossessing a deceased person of his loa is called *déssounin*, 764
or *déssouné*. The essence of it is the transference of the mait' tête from the 776
head of the dead person into a special receptacle, an earthen jar called a *govi* or *pot tête*. Sometimes it is transferred to the head of a child in the family, though usually this comes later.

There have been many descriptions of this ritual, and they seem to show that, though the tradition is a constant one, the specific patterns of the services are variable. Different regions, different cult centers, and different houngans conduct the rites in different ways.

Eugene Aubin wrote, for example:

> On the day of death, the deceased is placed standing up; the *papaloi* [houngan] [793]
> conducts the rites which retire the *mystère* [loa] from the body and introduce it into a jar, which is then carefully sealed. On the ninth day, after the feast for the [765]
> dead, the jar is broken and liberty given to the *loa*.[5]

Melville Herskovits reported:

> If the dead person was a Vodun priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance*, steps [766]
> are taken . . . "to remove the *loa* from his head" so that his soul will not go under [775]
> the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause the family much harm if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar. . . . The *houngan* [793]
> stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, into which the *loa* is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be "given" to a successor.[6]

As Herskovits understands it, it is the "soul" of the dead person that 114
would go to live "under the water," rather than the loa. This would appear 764
to be a fusion of two separate elements—the wandering, troublesome 775
"spirit" of a dead person and the mait' tête who retires "under the water." 776
Actually, Haitians are not always consistent in their explanations of what happens, or of the difference between loa and souls. On the hounfor altar there may be some govis that contain "souls" or "spirits" and others that contain loa; though the distinction is readily appreciated, Haitians are

[5] [Translated from the French of Aubin, En Haiti, p. 212
Cf. p. 350, category 116.--Analyst]

[6] [Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley, pp. 213-214.
Cf. p. 350, category 116. --Analyst]

764 sometimes hard put to explain the similarity of treatment of these two
775 categories.
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Another investigator, Alfred Métraux, has provided a vivid description
764 given by a Haitian of a ceremony of removing the loa. In this instance
776 the corpse was not placed in an upright position as described by Aubin
but was laid on a specially prepared bed. Attending the body were the
houngan, his hounsi, and a child of the dead man who was to receive the
liberated loa.

> The child . . . grasps in his hand a black-and-white or a white cock. On the ground in front of the bed they arrange a fine white napkin. On top of it there are syrup, candles . . . , *tafia*, and other things. After they have finished sprinkling water, clapping their hands, singing to the *loa*, they all go around the bed of the dead person. The child, with the cock in his hand, makes the rounds with the *houngan*. They wave the rooster, they wave it back and forth two, three, four, five, six times over the dead person's head. During this time all those present get possessed by the *loa*,
> ● [793] sing, clap their hands. The dead person's bed begins to creak. The *houngan* climbs on the bed and grabs the dead person's two arms. . . . He pulls him to a sitting position. The child (into whose head the *loa* is to be transferred) strikes the chicken three times on the head of the dead person. He lets go the chicken, and the chicken flies up and starts to run all around the room, smashing pots and vessels. They grab the chicken and let it go in the air three times, shouting: *Ai bobo loa à!* Immediately the *loa* goes into the head of the dead person's child.[7]

764 The houngan cited by Métraux is described as pulling the corpse to a
776 sitting position, but more commonly it is believed that the houngan has
793 the power to make the body sit up by itself. A man from Jérémie explained it this way:

"The body is laid out on a mat. The houngan shakes his asson over the dead man, and talks to the loa in the head. He calls the loa's name: 'Changogolo! Changogolo! Changogolo!' He calls, calls, calls. He doesn't call the dead man's name, he calls the maît' tête. 'Changogolo! Changogolo! Get up! Wake up! Sit up!' The corpse sits up. It even talks. Then the houngan says, 'Lie down!' And the corpse lies down. But it is not the dead man who sits up. The dead man is dead. It is the maît' tête who has forced the body to sit up. After this the houngan takes the loa from the head and puts it in a pot tête. Then the body can be buried. And afterward the loa can be put in the head of someone else or freed. Or the houngan may keep the loa in the pot tête and sell it to someone who needs a loa to work for him. If they buried the corpse without a *déssounin*, the loa would resent it and go away below the water."

764 George Eaton Simpson has written an excellent description of a cere-
766 mony for removal of the loa from the head of a deceased houngan.[8] The
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[7] [Hall and others, Haitian Creole, American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 54, pp. 188-189. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

[8] [Simpson, "Four Vodun Ceremonies" Journal of American Folklore, April-June, 1946, pp. 155-162. Cf. p. 350, Cat. 116. --Analyst]

rites took place in the region of Plaisance in northern Haiti. Such a ceremony, Simpson notes, may be attended by several houngans other than the Vodoun priest who is officially in charge. They "share the obligation and pleasure of conducting this service for their colleague, their former rival, and perhaps their former enemy." In a room of the deceased houngan's house is the body, attended by the family, relatives, close friends, and the officiating houngan and his assistants. 764 766 793 776

> . . . Near the body, which is covered by a sheet, are placed a jug and a new canari (a large earthen jar). The officiating houngan makes the sign of the cross, mumbles a few ritual formulas, and taking a spoon puts some "manger les morts" (special food for the dead) in the canari: plantains, yams, bananas, tairauts, sweet potatoes, corn meal, roasted corn, bread, cakes, rice, millet, meat, chicken, pistachio, chopped coconut, and other kinds of food. He then adds some water and stirs this mixture. . . . The other houngans perform the same rite. The family, friends, and others in the room imitate the acts of the houngans with the green branches which they hold in their hands. In a grave voice and with solemn gestures the officiant then appeals to the *loas* with songs and prayers. He invites them to come to the aid of their faithful servant, to protect him in the other world as they have protected him in this world. Following the songs and prayers the leader pronounces these words: 764 766 793 776 539
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> "Innocent! A good man has left us!
> The mother of the children weeps.
> Weep, console yourselves.
> Boss Accelus, he was here.
> He died.
> Master Pierre Jean-Baptiste, he was here.
> He died.
> General Baptiste, he was here.
> He died.
> Marius who was left,
> He died.
> But Brother Joseph survives,
> We will cry, we will console ourselves."[9]
>
> The weeping and the cries redouble, but the *père-savane* [prèt' savane] and the houngan carry on. In the other room the *père-savane* solemnly intones:
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> "I have only one soul
> Which must be saved.
> By the eternal flame,
> I must preserve it."[10]
>
> The officiating houngan speaks directly to the dead man: "Boss Marius, here is a canari that your heirs have especially prepared for you so that in the future you will not have any trouble and demand other sacrifices of them. You others, the dead, are always unreasonable. Because you have peace you forget that the times are hard and that on this earth we unfortunate men are crushed by suffering. Leave your family in peace after this service, Boss Marius. Do not torment them, and do not send illnesses to their children or misery to their older people. You were always a good

[9] [As translated by Courlander from Simpson's Creole text, ibid., p. 156. The preceding paragraph is from p. 155. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

[10] [Translated by Courlander from the Creole of Simpson's text. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

764 766 793 776 [539] father when you were living. Continue to protect your family after death. If you need other services give abundantly to your heirs in order to obtain satisfaction. Oh, good father, good servant, good parent, good friend! Good-bye! Do not forget us as we shall not forget you."[11]

Then the houngan goes to the canarie, strikes it three times with a piece of palm bark, and chants an invocation to the loa and to God, while members of the family dance where they stand, shaking the green branches they hold. There follows an invocation to twins. [787] After a number of loa have "entered" the service, as manifested by possessions, the houngan undertakes to find out how death came to the deceased man. An assistant brings the sacred divining shells[12] of the dead man, and the officiating houngan throws them on the floor, pours tafia three times, and lights a candle. The shells are then consulted. Three times he goes through the procedure of casting the shells and consulting them. Later he announces [775] that "the death of Boss Marius is not the death of an ordinary man, that he is now resting in La Ville-au-Camp (capital of the loas which is 'under the water'), and that the loas will continue to protect his descendants provided that they show themselves worthy of protection."[13] There is more singing and ritual, and then the canarie is covered. The loa from the head of Marius has found a temporary resting place. A little later in the service "the houngan raises the canari as high as possible, almost as high as his face, as he repeats the last line: 'Where may I find refuge?' With a quick movement the canari is shattered. The food is scattered, the loas are satisfied, and the crowd breaks into disorderly flight. . . ."[14] A few hours later the body of the deceased is buried.

764 184 776 It is obvious that these rituals vary a good deal according to regional practices and according to the importance of the persons for whom they are conducted. Furthermore, there is a good deal of difference of opinion among Haitians as to what actually takes place when the maît' tête is taken from the head of the deceased man.

793 764 184 Although the prêt' savane (bush priest) is subsidiary to the houngan at death rites, his is nevertheless a conspicuous presence. He may begin the services with prayers for the dead, in which the family joins, while the houngan remains in the background. Later, the houngan takes over. In certain regions, however, the prêt' savane is dispensed with altogther, his function being absorbed by the houngan.

764 As reported by Herskovits, the wake for the dead is one of the most important ceremonies in the death rites. He says:

> [766] Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young children if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. . . . The wife and the children either stay

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[11] [This and the preceding paragraph are from Simpson, op. cit., p. 156. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[12] [For footnote, see Category 116, p. 350.--Analyst]

[13] [Simpson, op. cit., p. 159. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[14] [Ibid., p. 161. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

764 with the corpse or are nearby with friends. The one who bathed the corpse remains constantly at its side as members of the family come and go, since the body must never be alone.[15]

764 524 53 But outside the house another kind of activity goes on. There the young people usually gather to sing gay songs, to play games, and to listen to stories. A professional storyteller, or a nonprofessional of repute, is called upon to entertain the children. He may give an entire night to Bouki and Malice stories, or to *contes* with interspersed songs in which the audience participates. Special singing games, stick games, and card games are played. But the drums are silent, both in the dead person's house and in the countryside at large. Rhythms for the game songs are provided by handclapping, or by vocal sounds which simulate percussion instruments.

764 (184) Burial ceremonies vary according to local tradition and the status of the deceased person. Near the little fishing village of Petit Goave in southwestern Haiti, I witnessed a funeral cortege which might have been seen almost anywhere in the country. It was led by the widow of the dead man. She rode on a white horse, followed by four men carrying the dead body on a litter made of plain planks. There was no coffin, the body being covered only by its white shroud.[16] Behind the corpse plodded a group of twelve or fifteen peasants, friends and relatives of the dead man. Some of them had just come in from the fields and still carried their machetes in their hands. Others carried short *cocomacaque* sticks, which are believed useful for warding off baka and other demons who lurk along the path of the traveler.

The woman on the horse lamented loudly. When she came to where other peasants stood respectfully at the road's edge, she stopped her horse and faced them, raising her voice to an anguished pitch, calling on them to take note of her bereavement and of the fine virtues of the dead man. Some of the spectators whom she addressed, standing with their hats in hand, nodded and tried to say consoling words, such as "Oui Manman, li grand moune" (Yes, Mama, he was a fine man), or "Quand Bondieu vlé ou li prend" (When God wants you he takes you). A market woman with a load on her head suddenly became possessed by a loa as the cortege passed her. This seemed to increase the anguish of the widow, who lamented with increased vigor.

[793] ● [776] The four men carrying the corpse sometimes moved in a zigzag course, first to one side of the road, then to the other. When the procession came to a crossroad it stopped momentarily. The houngan, scarcely distinguishable from the other peasants in blue denim, came forward and stood in the center of the crossroads shaking his tiny hand bell and calling upon Malt' Kalfu (Master of the Crossroads) to grant safe passage. While he

[15] [Herskovits, op. cit., p. 208. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[16] [For footnote, see Category 116, p. 350. --Analyst]

764 invoked the loa, the pallbearers brought the body forward as though to go straight ahead, but then they began to lurch and sway as though an invisible force were pushing them around. They veered as though to take the right turn, and again they lurched and staggered. At last they turned toward the left, and in this direction they found the road clear. The houngan thanked the Master of the Crossroads, the widow took her place at the head of the procession, and it proceeded on its way to the cemetery.

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In the services for a dead houngan described by Simpson, the body is placed in a coffin, which is carried to all the places sacred to the loa of the hounfor before being taken to the cemetery. First it is taken to the sacred trees where the loa reside, then to the sacred spring "whose waters have cured many sicknesses which physicians had pronounced incurable . . .
([illegible]3) The bearers of the coffin circle the spring several times. The coffin is swung [toward] each of the four cardinal points." Afterward the procession continues its way to the burial ground.[17]

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But the treatment given to the dead may vary according to the manner in which they died. Leyburn notes, for example, that "a person struck by lightning . . . would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God."[18] It may well be that the Haitian rationale for not holding ceremonies for an individual killed by lightning is that God has already held the final ceremony. But in the Haitian mind all deaths are, in the last analysis, acts of God, even though magic, poison, or accident may have played an immediate part. Why, then, should the corpse struck by light-
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[174]
ning be treated so differently? The answer would appear to lie in a custom of the Yoruba of dispensing with all burial rites for persons killed by lightning, such persons being considered enemies of the lightning deity Chango. In Dahomey, Herskovits reports, the same attitude prevails in regard to persons killed by lightning:

> If a person is killed by lightning he . . . stands convicted by this fact of some grave crime which has incurred the displeasure of the god of the Thunder Pantheon (Xevioso). A person so killed is never buried by his family, but the body is turned over to the chief priest and cult-members of these deities. It is believed that a man killed in this fashion remains upright until the chief priest questions him and forces him to confess the crimes he had committed to be so punished. No one touches any
> [768] of the belongings of such a man, not even his money. The house in which he lived is allowed to go to ruin, an *azan* of palm fronds being placed around it to guard
> [784] against anyone entering it. The moveable property of such a man, his clothes, his
> [824] stools, and his dishes, are thrown away at the crossroads . . .[19]

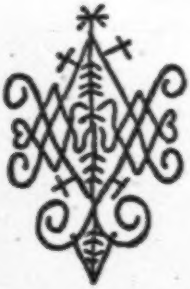
766 The burial of a Haitian who dies of smallpox likewise differs from that of one who dies a "normal" death. The victim of smallpox is buried without a coffin in a segregated part of the cemetery. The reason for this lies

[17] [Simpson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 161. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[18] [Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 156, Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

[19] [Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 398. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[P. 41]



5. Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors

The Ordeal by Fire: Kanzo

To advance beyond the lowest status in the hounfor, the hounsi must 794
undergo the test of fire. This ritual is known as *kanzo*, meaning "to tie 789
fire." In the drama of the hounfor there are many tests and ordeals. When 796
certain loa enter, the mounted persons will eat broken glass. Other loa 787
will cause their "horses" to rub hot pepper in their eyes. Still others will compel possessed persons to cut themselves with machetes. But these are bravado actions of the deities who have entered into the bodies of the servitors. The kanzo test is a formalized and premeditated ritual, in which it is demonstrated that the power of the cult—and the spirit of the individual—is superior to fire. Once having passed through this rite, the ordinary hounsi becomes a *hounsi kanzo*.

The kanzo ceremony—or, as it is known in some parts of Haiti, the *brulé zin* (the boiling pot)—is performed in diverse ways according to the tradition of the particular hounfor. But common to all is the dipping of the hands into boiling oil.

The common hounsi, the bossale, is prepared gradually for kanzo. In the course of certain rites she undergoes a smoke ordeal. On all fours, her head close to a fire, she must breathe in smoke without choking or coughing. When these and other tests indicate that she is ready, she will be permitted to undergo the rite of the brulé zin.

Near the town of Thomazeau in the Cul-de-Sac Plain I witnessed one of these rituals. It began with a dance, in which only the hounsi of the cult participated. They were all dressed in white. The chief drummer wore a woman's blouse, a kerchief on his head, and on top of that a woman's
straw hat. He played alone while the houngan invoked the loa Legba. [793]
Then there were songs for Ogoun, and the dancing resumed.

The dance court was larger than average—about forty feet by sixty.

● 793 794 787 796 789 Attached to the ever-present po'teau mitan, or center post, were threecoil lamps which threw a flickering light. At the entrance to the dance court a glowing-hot iron bar stood erect in a charcoal fire—the symbol of kanzo and of the loa Ogoun.

When the preliminary dances were over, the hounsi retired to one side of the court, where they sat in two rows facing the center.

Ritual rattle and bell in hand, the houngan took his place by the sacred center post. He was an elderly man with a gray beard. He wore a red kerchief like a turban around his head. He smoked a cigar, and in his free hand he held a bottle of rum. The red kerchief, the rum, and the cigar were all in honor of Ogoun. He moved back and forth across the center of the court, talking casually, even joking and laughing. The drums began again, on a signal from the houngan, and a number of visiting houngans [535] and mambos came forward and began a stately Jenvalo dance. The backs of their hands touching their knees, their backs bent low, they moved slowly counterclockwise around the center post. The mambos outnumbered the houngans four to one. The hounsi sitting on the sidelines sang. The song was for Maîtresse Ézilie. The houngan in charge stood by patiently, deep in thought. His assistant, the laplace, kept time with a small rattle and led the singing.

When the song came to an end, the visiting cult priests and priestesses retired from the dance ground. Again the hounsi danced. Afterward the houngan began to talk *langage,* twirling his bottle of rum about recklessly. He was speaking to a loa. The chief drummer beat out a salute to Ogoun. Then the houngan raised the bottle and placed it to his ear. It gurgled away, some of the liquid trickling down his face. He seemed to be swallowing the rum.

While all the hounsi, with bowed heads, sat on the ground, the houngan recited from the ritual of the Catholic service. Latin words, then Creole words in Latin cadences. After a while the houngan's assistant took over the recitation, and the hounsi answered him responsively.[1] When the prayers were over, the hounsi arose and passed into the hounfor. The drums began a fast Nago rhythm, and the hounsi emerged with brilliant silk flags studded with tiny brass rivets. The houngan's chief assistants—the laplace and the houngénicon—carried military sabers upraised. The dancers circled in single file around the center post, a triumphal military heralding of the deity of war and the forge.

To the accompaniment of a crescendo of drums, the procession suddenly reversed its direction. Watching the upraised saber of the laplace for a signal, the hounsi reversed their direction again.

000 When the dance drama ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into

[1] [Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the prêt savane. Cf. P. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

when the dance drawing ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into
the hounfor. Then they sat on the ground while the houngan came for- 793
ward to the center post to make his ritual flour drawing. Holding the flour 794
in his hand, he allowed a little of it to trickle out in a fine white line. He 787
worked rapidly, with half-closed eyes, speaking *langage*. A complicated 789
white geometric pattern grew on the earth around the center post. Among 796
its intricate designs highly stylized phallic forms were discernible. When 532
the houngan had finished the drawing, he wrote the name of the loa
whom they were serving: Ogoun Badagry. Then the other houngans and
mambos came forward, one at a time, to add to the design. When the vèvè
was completed it covered virtually the entire dance court.

The laplace came from the hounfor with a bundle of brilliantly colored 793
beads. He stood by the houngan at the center post. One by one the hounsi 794
came before the houngan, dropped on their knees, and kissed the ground. 787
Around each hounsi's neck the houngan placed a string of beads. He raised 789
her, pirouetted her first to the right, then to the left. The pirouette was to 796
encourage possession by the loa.

From the hounfor the hounsi now brought herbs and vegetables for the [782]
sacrifice. Baskets and bottles were set out neatly on the ground, along with
bundles of sticks and the iron pots, or *zins*.

The dance was resumed in a single rotating line around the houngan and the ritual offerings. Two hounsi in the center of the circle built fires, one on each side of the court. Over the fires they set the ritual iron pots. They poured oil into the pots and began the preparation of ritual food balls, like dumplings, from the ingredients at hand. One by one they dropped the dumplings into the oil, which was soon boiling.

The drumming, singing, and dancing were sustained at a high tension. A second team of drummers took over without a break in the music. The dancers now were almost exhausted. With a quick motion, the houngan spilled some rum into one of the boiling pots. A blue alcohol flame shot high into the air. Some of the hounsi screamed but continued to dance. Three of them fell to the ground, their limbs jerking uncontrollably. The loa had entered. Two of the "mounted" hounsi arose and continued to dance, staggering and jerking across the dance court. The third had to be lifted and carried into the hounfor.

The man who was to undergo initiation was waiting in the *djévo*, a special room in the hounfor. For the past seven days he had lain on a mat in the djévo, in virtual isolation except for visits from the houngan and the laplace.

Now the kanzo initiate was brought out, completely covered with a white cloth. Only his hands and feet could be seen. With one hand on the shoulder of the laplace, who preceded him, he moved with the dancers

794 in a circle around the two boiling pots. On the seventh circuit of the
787 course, the laplace stopped him at the first pot. The houngan grasped the
789 man's free hand and, bending down, dipped it into the boiling oil. There
796 was no visible indication of pain. They moved to the second pot, and the
793 man's hand was dipped again. They proceeded again to the first pot,
where the dipping was repeated, then back again to the second pot. The neophyte's hand entered the boiling oil seven times in all. He made no sound, showed no resistance, no reflexes. Then the hounsi took him back to the hounfor. It was all over. After three days of isolation, they said, he would be kanzo.

The houngan peeled an orange, while everyone crowded close to watch. In it he found a two-gourde note. He peeled another orange and found in it a slip of paper with the name of a woman on it. She came forward, and everyone laughed. She was an old woman, the oldest of the hounsi. The houngan held the two-gourde note between his teeth. The old woman took the other end of the note in her teeth, but she had to kiss the houngan before he would let go.

796 The ritual of brulé zin, or kanzo, is of unmistakable West African ori-
794 gin. Herskovits has described a ceremony in Dahomey which in many
171 details could easily have taken place in Haiti. The Dahomean rite was in
honor of the gods of the Thunder pantheon. Here, too, we find a pot of boiling palm oil, in which are the sacred dumplings: "When the fire had finally subsided and only a faint column of smoke issued from the pot, the initiate came dancing toward it, thrust her hand into the boiling oil, and lifted out a dumpling. . . ."[2]

FAMILY RITES AT LÉOGANE

769 These services for family ancestors took place in the mountains above
796 Léogane at the ancestral home of my friend Libera Borderau. They were
787 conducted on the grounds of his grandmother's house. The ritual began
787 with dancing. Against the wall of the house sat the three drummers with
778 their Arada drums. Near them, leaning against the wall, were the flags
of the family loa. Also near by was a long high table serving as a makeshift altar called the *pé*. In the very center of the table in a clean white dish lay eight loa stones—old Carib artifacts. The stones were identical in shape, all of them perfectly symmetrical, resembling small, pointed cigars. In the *pierre-loas* lived the family deities, and much of the ceremony was built around them. The stones had been bathed and polished in oil for the occasion. Set around the plate of stones were numerous small *criches* (French, *cruches*—clay water jugs), glass bottles, and earthenware jars which also contained loa. On the low bench before the table, seven dishes

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[2] [Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 165. Cf. P 351, Cat. 116.—Analyst]

were set out in a row, and before them four *couis*, the half-gourd bowls 769
used in services to the marassas, the twin spirits. 796

In the house, at the center of the floor, was a round flat stone about ten 787
inches in diameter and about two inches thick, resembling a millstone. 778
This was the *pierre-manman*, the mother stone responsible for the coming of the other loa stones and who cared for them in the absence of the family. In this stone, they said, was the spirit of the old loa Nananbouclou. On a mat in the corner of the room two children slept.

Outside, on a chair, his back against the wall of the house, the houngan 769
sat, his rattle and bell in hand. He had come several miles to conduct the 796
service. Most of those who danced were his own hounsi. The houngan 787
was "strong" and well known in the region; people said he had worked 793
for high government officials, including the president himself.

After several rounds of Arada dancing in which children as well as 769
adults took part, the drums stopped. The houngan and his laplace moved 796
up to the building which served for the night as the hounfor. It was up a 794
steep slope, about a hundred feet from the dance court. There they pre- 789
pared for the sacrifice to Chébo Profiel, the honored loa of the evening. Passing in and out among the spectators was a woman who would be possessed by Papa Chébo; since he was the guest of the service, she (or the loa in her head) was free to come and go as she chose, to speak as she pleased, and to do what she wished. Mostly she shook hands with people, a ceremony which continued throughout the night. First she would offer the right hand, then the left; or perhaps both at once, in which case the hands would be shaken downward vigorously three or four times. Someone ignorantly said, "Bon soir, Madame!" and she turned on him to reprimand his insolence. She was not "Madame," she was *l'Autorité*, the Authority.

During the course of the evening the conviction became stronger and stronger in her that she was Chébo Profiel. From the time we first saw her until the end of the evening her personality underwent marked changes. She "became" Papa Chébo.

The houngan sat before a small hole, possibly a foot deep and ten inches 782
in diameter, in front of the hounfor. The fresh earth was piled neatly to 793
the side, and an enameled plate was set on top of it. Around the hole were 796
the various dishes to be offered to Chébo Profiel. The laplace prayed in 787
Latin, a short Catholic service. Then the houngan, shaking his beaded 769
rattle and tinkling his bell, called for Chébo to "enter." He made a small
maize-flour drawing around the hole, and then began the feeding of the (502)
loa. The plates arranged for the feast contained roasted maize, roasted peanuts, bread, cassava, rice, and other foods. There were bottles of rum,

793 kola (a soft drink), *clairin*, and syrup. The houngan, entreating Chêbo to
796 accept, poured a little *clairin* into the hole. The loa seemed to accept, for
782 the *clairin* was quickly absorbed in the ground. The houngan took rice
787 from the plate with his fingers, about the amount he might place in his
769 own mouth, and put it gently into the hole. He was feeding Papa Chêbo, literally placing the food in his mouth. After the rice, which was dry, the houngan poured in a little more *clairin* to moisten it. He ordered the laplace to break up the bread, and then he placed a small piece in the hole and washed it down with a little rum. The houngan seemed to understand that Papa Chêbo Profiel was hungry, and that he was also an epicure. He allowed him to taste the roasted corn, and then washed it down with a trickle of kola. Then he gave him a taste of the roasted peanuts, and another morsel of bread. Once Chêbo got his mouth too full in his zest for the meal, and the assemblage had to wait for him to finish "coughing." Then the houngan gave him a long drink of kola to clear his windpipe. After that the houngan was more careful in the way he fed him—a little cassava, a drink, a little bread. As the houngan fed the loa, some of the spectators reached over and placed small coins in the empty dish by the hole. These too were for Chêbo. Finally, Chêbo was through eating. The food was gone.

769 The houngan, shaking his rattle and his bell, blew two sharp notes on
794 his whistle. At the door of the hounfor appeared l'Autorité, the hounsi
789 possessed by Papa Chêbo. More than ever she resembled the loa, and less
792 than ever she resembled herself. In one hand she held a saber. Her bodily
[793] movements were spasmodic, as though she was being forced to do things
[534] to which she was not accustomed. She moved slowly into the circle, her eyes almost closed; she leaned backward, then twisted grotesquely around, jerked this way and that, buffeted by the loa. Suddenly she began to whirl.
[793] The houngan called "Tambouyé!" and the drummers beat a slow complicated rhythm, a salute to Chêbo. The loa had really "entered" now. There was no mistaking the jerky, irresponsible movements of the hounsi's head and shoulders. She leaned backward as though about to fall, incredibly kept her balance, rolled forward as though she were going to plunge to the ground, and twisted herself upright once more. The saber passed close to the faces of the spectators, even scratched some of them and cut their clothing. Her movements had a definitely masculine character. Chêbo Profiel was a man.

782 She reached over to seize a chicken that was held out to her. Grasping
787 its legs with her free hand, she continued her spinning, twisting, lurching
794 dance. Then she cradled the chicken, rocking it back and forth until it
796 was in a hypnotic trance. She placed it on the ground before a tiny pile
769

of ground maize prepared by the laplace. The chicken, released, sat mo- 782
tionless, making no effort to escape. All watched attentively, the houngan 787
shaking his rattle and bell. Suddenly the chicken cocked its head and, 769
seeming to see the corn for the first time, reached out and pecked at it. 794
This was the loa receiving the sacrifice—a difficult conception if one thinks 796
of the chicken itself as the sacrifice. "Chébo," l'Autorité, snatched the chicken up, danced violently about, the loa in full possession of her body. With a swift movement of the saber, she cut the chicken's throat and caused the first drop of blood to fall into the hole. When the chicken stopped struggling, it was left there, head downward. L'Autorité took up a cock which was given her, cradled him, and set him before the ground maize. When he pecked at it, she picked him up and danced, around and around, jerking, lunging, never quite falling. She took his comb between her teeth, supporting his body gently with her hands, and spun around and around. Then she released him, cut his throat, and placed him in the hole with the chicken.

At the side of the hounfor, waiting, was a goat (called by the ritual name Dogwé). He had a fine silky white coat and a long beard. He was brought in to the place of sacrifice, and l'Autorité dropped to her knees to embrace his neck with her arms. She remained there a moment, her cheek against his, talking to him. Then she arose, a machete in hand instead of a saber, and began to pirouette while three men threw the goat on his side. Then she cut with the machete, and the goat's blood, too, began to run into the hole. For the first time her dance became unquestionably frenzied. She swung strong, full blows of the machete at the goat's neck, finally severing the head. From the hindquarters she cut a piece of red meat and placed it in her mouth.

At a signal from the houngan, three men carried the goat's body away to be dressed and cooked, and a woman came forward to wipe the blood from Papa Chébo's face.

The drums began again, a Dahomé dance, and the people relaxed. Many [535]
joined in the dancing while l'Autorité strutted about shaking hands and talking *langage*. She also danced, with gestures and movements wholly masculine. At one point she briefly advanced on another woman, making sexual gestures.

The houngan and his houngénicon retired to the front room of the hut. 769
A new mat had been placed there for the houngénicon. She lay down on it, 793
and the houngan sat in a chair against the wall. This was the beginning 794
of the ceremony of calling *les morts en bas dleau* (the dead below the 796
water).

Meanwhile, before the hounfor, the laplace and a hounsi were building [346]

769 the *caré*, a hogan-like structure made of bent saplings covered with cotton
● 793 cloth.

794 Rain had been threatening all evening, and now it began. Some people
796 crowded into the hut where the goat was being barbecued. Others came
[346) into the hut where the houngénicon lay; in the back room, with the pé, Chébo, l'Autorité, strutted and shook hands with the visitors. The straw roof leaked a little, but no one minded very much. The houngan and his houngénicon, who had been under a strain, relaxed. The rain would mark the length of the intermission. Except for the sound of the rain and "Chébo's" *langage*, there was no noise. No one spoke. Then the houngan,
769 his eyes closed, began to sing an Ibo song.

793
796 Ibo Lazile oh, éya!
539 Grand gout manqué tuyé moin!
A la yun an six mois m' sous la mer,
Grand gout manqué tuyé moin!

Ibo Lazile, oh, éya!
Hunger has not killed me!
One year and six months I have been under the sea,
Hunger has not killed me!

The others sang responsively:

Ibo Lazile, oh, Ibo!
Ibo grand gout pas tuyé'm, Ibo!

Ibo Lazile, oh, Ibo!
Ibo, hunger has not killed me, Ibo!

After a while the houngan called "Abobo!"—which was the signal to conclude. The rain was still coming down, and he called "Abobo!" for the rain to cease also. But it did not stop, and everyone laughed. He began another song, also Ibo:

Ianman Ibo lélé!
Ianman Ibo lélé!
Pilet pied'm mandé pardon,
Ça pardon wa fai pou moin?
Ça ou gainyan con ça? [Ex. 80]

Ianman Ibo lélé!
Ianman Ibo lélé!
Step on my foot and ask my pardon,
What will the pardon do for me?
What do you have [what are you doing] like that?

And the others came in, spiritedly:

Ianman, oh, un hunh!	Ianman, oh, un hunh!
Ianman, con ça'm dansé Ibo!	Ianman, like this I dance, Ibo!
Ianman, oh, un hunh!	Ianman, oh, un hunh!

While those in the front room were singing, l'Autorité, in the inner 764
room, was suddenly thrown about violently by her possession. She raced 794
into one wall of the hut, striking her head, flung herself back against the 776
opposite wall, kicking, trembling, calling out strange *langage*. She crashed 787
into the pé, upsetting the dishes, and then fell across the mat where the children were lying half asleep. One of them, a boy of about four, became hysterical. He knew the woman, but he had never seen her like this. His mother carried him to the front room, where she finally quieted his crying. L'Autorité, spent for the moment, lay across the mat. No one touched her. Later, when the singing was resumed, she got to her feet and made the rounds once more, shaking hands again and again. She was now smoking a pipe.

When the houngan heard the rain subsiding, he again called out [793]
"Abobo!" as though he were giving the order to cease, and everyone, himself included, laughed again. When it had definitely stopped, someone went out to shake the water from the canopy. The drums were brought out of their shelter, and although the ground was sticky with mud, the dancing was resumed. The houngan asked for a fast Nago dance, and the front room of the hut was once more emptied of everyone except the houngan and his houngénicon.

The laplace and his assistant went up the hill to put the finishing touches 769
to the *caré*, the temporary structure in which the houngan was going to 793
receive the loa and the dead. From a small chest of chinaware, the houn- 794
génicon set a "table" for the loa on the ground where she sat. The sacrifice 796
had been for a single loa, Chébo; the rest of the service was for all the loa 787
served by the family. The houngan, sitting next to the houngénicon, [346]
sounded his rattle and spoke *langage*. He sang quietly, a song which only the houngénicon could hear, watching her intently. A large basket of dishes, bottles, and various other paraphernalia was brought by a hounsi. Candles were lighted and set on the ground. The houngan gave a signal, and the hounsi brought a large square of white cotton cloth, which they stretched tight over the houngénicon like a canopy. The candle flame and the silhouette of the houngénicon could be seen through the cloth, but the details of the service were not visible. Sometimes, the houngan, his bell and rattle in hand, would go under the cloth to assist in the calling of the loa. Then, without warning, things began to happen very rapidly.

One of the hounsi who sat before the door began to quiver and make strange noises in her throat: "Ka, ka, k-k-k-k-k-k-a!" Her body shook violently, and her head rolled on her shoulders. Almost simultaneously something began to happen under the cloth where the houngénicon was, and the members of the family crowded up to the *caré* by the hounfor. The houngénicon lay stiffly, her eyes closed, the white cloth removed. The

769 houngan carried out the large round basket in which lay the bottles and
793 the pierre-loas. The hounsi gathered around it, ten of them, to carry it to
794 the *card*. In the bottles were *les morts en bas dleau* (the spirits of the dead
796 (from below the water). Carrying the flags, three hounsi danced, singing,
787 up to the *card*. After them the laplace came, carrying in his left hand a plate of maize flour from which he made vèvès in the line of advance, simple marks symbolizing the crossroads. The drums were beating a special salute to the loa. The ten hounsi carrying the basket danced and sang. As
[535] they moved up the hill, they rotated, so that the basket revolved like the hub of a wheel. Their progress was not smooth, however; they jerked forward and backward as they rotated. Arriving before the *card*, first one, then a second, was entered by her loa. They fell, jerked, and stumbled. This was all a very good omen. The houngan called "Abobo!" for them to resist such possession, and the hounsi all sat down on the ground. The houngan placed the basket inside the *card* and entered after it. He called for his little bell, which the laplace passed in to him. The laplace closed the flap down tight, from the outside, and placed the flags against it.

[539] Upon a signal given from within, the hounsi began a song:

La famille semblé,
Oh semblé nous!
La famille semblé,
Oh nous semblé pou nou pa'lé parole nous là!
La famille semblé!

The family gathers,
Oh, we gather!
The family gathers,
Oh, we gather to speak our words here!
The family gathers!

769 The laplace took his position, his back to the *card*, while inside, because
796 of the candle burning there, the houngan could be seen setting out the
787 contents of the basket. The candle went out, and in the *card* the little bell
794 began to tinkle. The singing stopped. The houngan was beginning to
[793] talk to the dead below the water. First he talked *langage*. Then his voice was heard through the constant sound of the tiny bell, supplicating Papa Loko to talk a little bit with his "children." A faint, tremulous voice, that of a tired old grandfather, was heard to answer. Papa Loko was stirring himself out of a long silence. He talked a long while to the houngan. Sometimes they both spoke at once. Faintly he was heard to say that he had come a long way to see his children, and that he was very tired. But as he talked his strength returned to him, and, asking the houngan to wait, he spoke directly to his "children," who sat, respectfully and awed,

Oh, a day will come when they will remember me here, *kélé manyan!* 796
Oh, Damballa Wèdo é, *kélé manyan.* 781
Oh, Ayida Wèdo é, *kélé manyan!* 787
Oh, a day will come for you to remember me here, *kélé manyan!* [539]

During the evening about twenty loa and ancestors came into the *card* [776]
to talk. When the last had finished speaking the hills were already light,
and the service was over.

Service for Èzilie Fréda and St. Jacques Majeur

This service took place not in the open but under a tonnelle surrounded 796
by four walls, adjoining the hounfor of Alexis Stephan on the west fringes 776
of Port-au-Prince. Separate from the hounfor and dance court was a 346
shrine to the "dead" loa Gèdé Nimbo. The shrine was a small shed open
on one side. Within, lighted by flickering oil lamps, was a life-size effigy [532]
of Gèdé, a scarecrow-like figure dressed in the loa's traditional attire— [354]
black tail coat and trousers, and a tall opera hat. On the otherwise blank
face of the figure were smoked glasses with white rims.

The dancing was progressing under the supervision of the houngan's 796
adjutant, the laplace. He wandered among the drummers and dancers, [794]
encouraged the singing, and issued orders here and there. No one seemed
to take him very seriously. There was a good deal of joking, and the [522]
gathering seemed very much like an old-fashioned family reunion. There
were perhaps a hundred dancers and spectators—friends, relatives, and
devotees of Stephan's hounfor. Everyone was watching with affection an
old woman who could not be restrained from dancing. She executed old
classical steps and postures with a skill that called for running comment
all around her. As each piece came to an end someone would step up to
her and say something like: "Woy, Manman, mais ou passé mwé!" (Oh,
Mother, you are better than me!). Then they would attempt to get her
to sit down again, but she would only shake them off and urge the drummers
to get going if they were not too tired.

Eventually, the houngan, Stephan, made a casual entrance through the [793]
door of his adjoining hounfor. He held the usual ritual rattle and bell in [534]
his hand, and sauntered around to chat with his friends.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the dancing became more serious. 796
Soon, only the hounsi, the female servitors, were dancing. The drums 776
played a salute to Legba, the first loa to be called upon in a Vodoun service. [794]
For it is Legba who opens all gates and all highways, and who paves
the way for communication with other deities. Though he is not the greatest
of the loa, he is one of the most ancient. The houngan spilled water on [782]
the ground as a libation, and the dancing continued.

796 Then a well-dressed young man entered, and the drummers swiftly
793 changed to the salute reserved for guests of distinction. The hounsi sang,
[554] "Président passe là, l'ap monté au gouvernement!" and waved paper flags
[202] and kerchiefs. The young man was a distant relative of Stephan's; he also
was a houngan.

After a while Stephan brought from his hounfor a second ason, or ritual rattle, and another small hand bell, both of which he handed to the
[916] young man. He was extending the courtesy of his hounfor, sharing his
instruments of authority and religious power with his fellow houngan. Then followed an exhibition between the two houngans that was half duel and half ballet. They stood face to face, each of them holding the ason in one hand and the tiny bell in the other. Stephan was "testing" the young houngan for the edification of all present. Each tiny move made by Stephan was duplicated simultaneously by his guest, as though he were a mirrored reflection.

Every posture Stephan made was duplicated instantly by his guest. The asons and the bells were agitated constantly. The rattle in the young man's hand did precisely what Stephan's did. The two men looked into each other's eyes with intensity, as though this bound their movements together and unified them. When Stephan twisted to the left, the other houngan twisted to the right. Every contortion of the young man was an exact replica of Stephan's movements. The two asons rattled out the same rhythms and the same signals; so did the bells. The backdrop for this "test" was provided by the drummers. The faces of the two men broke into a sweat from the intense nervous effort. At last it came to an end. A woman came forward and wiped their faces with a colored kerchief. The "testing" ceremony was over. The visiting houngan had been proved.

796 Stephan then made a ritual vèvè, or maize-flour ritual drawing on the
793 ground. Afterward there was more singing and dancing by the hounsi.
787 They sang several songs for Ezilie Fréda, the "pure" loa. And Alexis
Stephan went into a trance. It was unexpected. The servitors had not
[532] prepared for it. In this emergency the visiting houngan took over. He
[794] seemed a little anxious. He was unfamiliar with the particular psycho-
[776] logical factors at play in this particular hounfor. He was not certain of
the character of Stephan's possession. But he took over grimly. The houngénicon, an older woman, stepped forward to help. While the young houngan wielded the ason and bell, the woman issued instructions. Stephan, his head hanging back, his eyes closed, was supported by two of the hounsi. Other servitors hurriedly brought out a white sheet and spread it on the ground. A chair and a table were set upon the sheet, and Stephan was placed in the chair, where he now sat with his head hanging limply on his chest.

Stephan had been mounted by Êzilie Fréda, the deity of whiteness and 796
purity. That was why he was protected from the earth by the white sheet 787
beneath him. While the drums continued to beat, the hounsi placed upon 793
the table a bottle of wine, a clean glass, and a white plate with boiled maize [794]
meal, topped by a whole egg. Then they held over Stephan—who had be- [776]
come, for the time being, Êzilie—a second white sheet. The possessed houngan began to bend forward and back with great rapidity, toward the surface of the table and back to an upright position, his arms hanging quietly downward. The hounsi fluttered the covering sheet in such a way that the spectators could not see what was going on beneath it. In less than a minute, Stephan's movements ceased. The sheet was removed. Stephan sat limply, talking *langage*. In the white dish only the broken shells of the egg and a small portion of the meal remained. Some of the wine was gone from the upright bottle. The glass still had a little wine in the bottom. Êzilie had accepted the sacrifice. Not once had Stephan's hands changed from their hanging position or approached the table. The eggshells themselves were clean, but a tiny trickle of liquid yolk ran from the corner of Stephan's mouth. The visiting houngan rattled his asson before Stephan, who arose wearily, with the help of the hounsi, and followed him through the door into the hounfor.

Again there was dancing, and a little while later Stephan emerged from the hounfor in a bizarre military costume of red velvet, wearing black glasses, a blue military cap with a red feather, and a sword. He was almost as weird as the effigy of Gèdé that stood outside. The houngan had now become St. Jacques Majeur, or Ogoun, the loa of war and the forge. His personality had undergone a dramatic change. Strictly speaking, Stephan was not in a trance as he had been a little earlier. He was in control of his movements, which were completely conscious, and yet he was certainly not in a "normal" state of mind. Previously Stephan had been in a state of possession; now, one might say, he was in a state of obsession. He had identified himself with St. Jacques. He strode and swaggered like St. Jacques. His bearing was regal, military, and awesome. His costume should have seemed funny, like similar costumes seen during Mardi Gras days, but instead it was unworldly and impressive.

He carried a rum bottle in his hand, and he moved through the gather-
ing making people drink from it. Those who drank from the bottle were
sharing with St. Jacques. Stephan poured more rum into an iron pot on
the ground and set it afire. The hounsi kanzo, the servitors of the higher [794]
order who had been through the fire ordeal, came forward and washed
their hands and arms with the burning rum, so that at times their whole
arms were aflame, until they quickly snuffed the fire out. Some of the
hounsi brought their children forward and washed their arms in the burn-

796 787 793 [794] ing rum also, as a foretaste of the kanzo rites they might one day go through.

There was dancing again for others besides the hounsi. The tension had passed. The ceremony was over, and the rest of the night was simply for pleasure.

776 Gèdé Nimbo, the "Dead" Loa

Gèdé Nimbo, also known as Baron Samedi, is one of the most powerful deities of the Haitian pantheon. He guards the cemetery and protects the graves, especially those of children. But Gèdé Nimbo is not simply another loa, he is a personification of death. Like death, he is given to whim. He is an intruder. He forces his way into services being held for other deities, behaves badly, and has to be wheedled to depart. He indulges in ribald humor when the mood strikes him, and the most solemn occasions are likely to be disturbed by his pranks. Gèdé Nimbo can be formidable when aroused, as he can be gentle and forbearing when it suits him.

Gèdé is always dressed in black, usually with a tail coat and top hat. He is always represented in this attire in the shrines where effigies of him are to be found. Elsie Clews Parsons, a number of years ago, reported this Haitian description of Gèdé:

> He is a *grande diable*. He makes all kinds of motions to make you laugh, but you must not laugh at him, for if you do he makes you "stop laughing" . . . Anything you touch, he takes and never returns, and you have to give him more and more. He smokes cigarettes, not cigars. He wears a coat and a hat, and carries a stick. He can make himself short or . . . as tall as a mast.[8]

The kind of motions Gèdé makes would in certain other cultures be regarded as obscenities. In Haiti they are merely public violations of social restraints and taboos, things no Haitian would think of doing in public view. But Gèdé, the loa of the graveyard, has special prerogatives. He does not fear criticism. He flouts propriety at will, he embarrasses, provokes, and insults with impunity.

776 787 796 At a Nago ceremony which I witnessed near Port-au-Prince, the stronghold of the Gèdé cult, Gèdé Nimbo entered with such gusto that he virtually made a shambles of the service. The first person to be mounted by the loa was the laplace, the houngan's understudy. He stiffened, twisted, jerked, and thrashed about. As the more violent phase of his possession wore off, he began to make lascivious loin movements, as though copulating with the center post. Afterward, he moved about, shaking hands and greeting various persons with insulting remarks calculated to make others laugh at the indignities. Stopping before a distinguished-looking spectator, Gèdé made a few loin movements in his direction. Grasping another man by the hands, he greeted him vigorously and inquired whether it was

[8] [Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti*. Cf. p. 351, Cat. 16.--Analyst]

his *zozo* (penis) to which his glasses were affixed. As the dance progressed, 776
the possessions came rapidly. The possessed persons, men and 787
women alike, leaped about the tonnelle, mimicking copulation. They 796
broke drinking glasses on the ground, threw themselves upon the drummers, and careened and crashed into spectators and dancers. In the course of the service there were nearly twenty possessions—all of them noteworthy for their portrayal of Gèdé Nimbo as a loa who has contempt for proprieties. For he is the spirit of the cemetery, the one who laughs last and best.

Near the mountain town of Kenskoff I saw another service for Gèdé,
which showed a different aspect of the loa of the graveyard. It took place [793]
inside the hut of a rural houngan, who was conducting the affair for his own immediate family and a few close friends. The hut itself was small. Its single room had been partitioned into two by hanging a sheet in the middle. On one side of the sheet a young child was lying on a mat next to the carefully stored Arada drums. On the other side the ceremony was taking place. Great bouquets of red flowers were arranged in a corner; above them hung a colored lithograph of the Christ child; below, on the floor, was a crude oil lamp with a floating wick. The floor area was no more than seven feet square, but at least twelve persons were crowded there, and others clustered in the doorway. Ritual flags leaned against the wall, one of red silk with a gold fringe, another of white silk with blue polka dots. A tiny space remained in the center of the floor for the houngan, whose "possession" by Gèdé was the feature of the service.

The houngan was dressed in a black stovepipe hat, a blue blouse with 776
white polka dots, and a black skirt over black trousers. In his hand he 787
carried a walking stick. He smoked a pipe constantly, a variation of the 796
customary cigarette. In the tiny space in the center of the room, the 793
houngan—or, more properly, Gèdé Nimbo—danced. The houngan's personality had changed—his voice, his postures, all his mannerisms. He spoke only through his nose, for that is the way Gèdé talks, as though he had a cleft palate.

He whirled around and around, singing and talking *langage* in turn.
His family sang: [539]

Gèdé-vi yo wè ago-é!
Gèdé-vi yo wè!
Papa Gèdé c'est loa!

It is Gèdé-vi they see, *ago-é!* *
It is Gèdé-vi they see!
Papa Gèdé is a *loa!*

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* *Agoé* exclamatory, signifying "I am here."

776 He was the center of all eyes. Most of the time he danced alone, gyrating
787 recklessly. Sometimes he danced with his houngénicon. Those who
793 watched clapped hands and uttered sounds imitating drums, for drums
796 were not being used in this service. The houngan carried the inevitable
clochette, or tiny hand bell.

When newcomers arrived, Gèdé greeted them by shaking both their hands downward, vigorously, three times. Then he wiped their faces with his kerchief, a ceremony which he repeated from time to time. He [535] danced with each of them a kind of Jenvalo step, simple, restrained, and dignified. One of the visitors fell to his knees to converse with him.

The entire evening was built around the houngan's representation of Gèdé. Properly speaking, the houngan was not in a trance. He was in full possession of all his normal faculties and was conscious of the slightest inconveniences and disturbances. Several times the clay bowl of his pipe fell from the reed stem, scattering hot ashes on the ground, and each time he paused to allow the houngénicon to clear them away. Yet he was carried away by his certainty that he was Gèdé. The obvious conviction of those who watched seemed to fortify him in his role. As the evening wore on, he became more and more detached from his normal personality. His psychic condition was not that of one who had been "mounted" by a loa; it was, rather, a continuously progressive ecstasy.

776 Gèdé is, in fact, more than a loa of the cemetery; he is a personification
761 of death in all its macabre, humorous, and unpredictable aspects. Death is not merely a thing dying; it is an entity, a positive force in nature. Death is Gèdé Nimbo. I believe that when the houngan became Gèdé, all who had crowded into his hut felt themselves to be in the presence of death itself. Death, a dynamic, aggressive force, danced and pirouetted among them, talking the language of the dead and of old Africa.

776 Gèdé is often stern, austere, and forbidding, but he has other aspects. Haitians take amused pleasure at the terror he can strike into the hearts of the mighty. An old Gèdé song goes:

[539] Papa Gèdé bel ga'çon!	Papa Gèdé is a handsome fellow!
Papa Gèdé bel ga'çon!	Papa Gèdé is a handsome fellow!
L'habillé tout en noi'!	He is dressed all in black
Pou'l monté au palais!	For he is going up to the palace!
L'habillé tout en blanc	When he's dressed all in white
Li semblé yun deputé!	He looks like a deputy!
L'habillé tout en noi'!	When he's dressed all in black
Li semblé yun senateur!	He resembles a senator!

776 According to tradition, the song had its origin in a march on the capital
788 by some houngans many years ago. The story is very old and no one
173 remembers many of the details.
539

000
remembers many of the details. But during the administration of President 776
Louis Borno (1922–1930) there was a reënactment of the original march. 788
There suddenly appeared in the streets of Port-au-Prince a crowd of Gèdé 643
mystères—houngans "possessed" by Gèdé Nimbo and attired in Gèdé 175
dress: tall black hats, long black tail coats, smoked glasses, black skirts over their black trousers. They carried flags, waved polka-dot kerchiefs, shook their ceremonial rattles, and paused sometimes to wipe the perspiration from one another's faces. They became the nucleus of a huge, noisy crowd moving up the hill toward the palace. Market women followed instead of going home; street gamins screamed and raced among them. Before they had arrived at the palace grounds they had taken on the semblance of a huge Mardi Gras band. They swerved through the gates of the palace grounds and along the drive, right to the steps of the palace itself. The guards, taken by surprise, waited helplessly for their officers to arrive.

At the palace door, the houngans demanded money from the president. Borno was in a dilemma. He was reputed to be sympathetic to Vodoun ritual but was only surreptitiously so. He feared the houngans, and he feared public opinion. What would the upper class of Port-au-Prince think, the Latin-culture Haitians? With Gèdé's worst manners, the Gèdé mystères cavorted on the palace steps. Finally Borno gave in. He sent the money out to them, and then the crowd of Gèdés marched out of the palace grounds, waving their flags and shaking their rattles.

SERVICE FOR THE HOUNSI BOSSALE

This ritual of calling the loa to speak through the mouth of the Vodoun 346
priest took place in the Bolosse section of Port-au-Prince. The hounfor was 796
situated in a congested slum area of the city, but the grounds around it 787
were spacious. The hounfor itself was small and unpretentious, and except for the adjoining tonnelle would easily have been mistaken for
another small wooden house. The houngan was a heavy-set man with a 793
black mustache. Quick to laugh and easy in his movements, he neverthe- 794
less commanded solemn respect from the hounsi and the other partici- 796
pants. His soft-spoken voice expressed assurance and authority. 787

There were a number of possessions in the course of the dancing, all more or less routine. Each time a possession occurred, the houngan came forward with his asson and bell, gave a pitcher of water and a candle to the possessed devotee, and conducted her through a ritual at the foot of the center post.

Later, one of the hounsi came and sat at the houngan's feet. She was not possessed but obviously was in a state of high tension. Other servitors brought from the hounfor a wooden washtub and set it on the ground

793 before the houngan. Staring into the tub, he shook his asson and called
794 upon a certain loa to enter. Then he placed a lighted candle upright in the
796 tub and watched it for a moment. The flame was suddenly snuffed out.
787 The houngan looked concerned. He removed the candle and called for another one. When he placed the new candle in the tub it remained burning. The houngan smiled. The loa had agreed to enter. The houngan and his chief assistant placed the tub upon the head of the waiting hounsi. She trembled violently as though she had received a shock, then leaped to her feet. The loa had mounted her and presumably was sitting in the tub on her head. She began to stagger back and forth across the dance court, while the drums beat a salute. The tub tottered dangerously but did not fall. The possessed hounsi then began to whirl. She stopped, and the tub continued to spin for a few seconds on her head. She twirled again in the opposite direction. Each time she stopped she waited for the tub to stop spinning. The twirling motion was accompanied by a constant jerking and lurching, as though she were about to lose her balance, but she never stumbled or fell. After perhaps five minutes of this violent "riding" by the loa, the houngan approached her with his asson and conducted her into the hounfor, the tub still on her head. Inside the hounfor he removed the tub, sent the loa away, and left the hounsi to rest.

[346] There was more dancing, and after a while the service was transferred to a small temporary cloth-covered structure resembling an American Indian hogan. The hounsi bossale—the servitors whose loa had not been "tamed" or conditioned—lay before the structure on their faces, side by side. There were twelve of them. The other hounsi covered them completely with white sheets. The houngan entered the hogan-like structure (the *card*) with a candle and a bell. He tinkled his bell and began to call upon the loa to speak to the hounsi bossale. Through his mouth, first one spirit and then another made comments. The hounsi under the sheets were tensely quiet, until one of them began to jerk and scream. Several others, as though responding to a trigger, joined in the screaming. Older women came to quiet them. The hysterical reaction of the hounsi bossale was regarded as simply a reflection of their beginners' status. Their loa had not yet been controlled. The ritual continued until the early hours of the morning, the loa and ancient ancestors coming in to speak, one after another.

244

THE FIRST YAMS AND THE FIRST RICE

[796] Each year, when the yams are harvested there is a great festival known as
the *mangé yam*. Of all things grown in Haiti, the yam is perhaps the most
[262] significant. It is the most vital of all staples, and it is traditional. The yam

776 to "eat" people; that is, to destroy them. To do this he employs such
753 means as disease, insanity, and destruction of crops. If a man serves
828 Pinga Maza well, the loa protects him in return; but for those who anger
731 him, Pinga is a menacing and vengeful creature. People often say, "Pinga, c'est djab" (Pinga is a devil).

346 The Pinga hounfor in Port-au-Prince is called the *Société de la Belle
353 Jeune Fleur*. Its peristyle is simple and is hardly distinguishable from
794 those of other small hounfors. Around the base of the center pole is a three-foot-high wall of masonry, decorated with simple cult symbols.
778 The outer room of the hounfor proper also resembles many another. The familiar pot têtes containing loa stand on a wooden altar, and there are Catholic lithographs on the walls. But the inner room belongs exclusively to Pinga Maza. Here are all the accoutrements and objects sacred to the deity. Everything is red. Pinga's clothing and kerchiefs are red. On the walls are painted esoteric designs—hands, skulls, and crosses—all in red. The bottles, magic bundles, and govis on the altar are decorated with red cloth, ribbons, or paint. In the middle of the earthen floor is embedded a heavy wooden cross. On each end of the crossbeam hangs a large calabash resembling a bulbous hand. And on top of the upright is affixed a human skull. The total impression of this hounfor is that of a bizarre aberration, calculated to intimidate and terrify. The houngan himself is relatively young, literate, and city wise. His personality is smooth and sharp, and he lacks the air of sincerity and easy simplicity which most often characterizes the houngan of the mountains.

353 In this inner room, before the skull and the cross, there took place a
754 small service for a client, to determine what kind of magic was needed
755 to fend off malevolent actions of an enemy. On the day of the divining session, there hung from the rafters of the tonnelle a long rope, which extended into a deep hole in the earth near the door. Hanging on the rope, down inside the hole, were two gray dolls tightly bound together. Hanging still farther down were a knife, a fork, and other, unidentifiable objects. This cluster of magic paraphernalia was an *expédition* at work; it was an elaborate pouin, which was working against an enemy who lived far away.

● 793 Before entering the hounfor, the houngan took a long rope whip
755 from the wall and cracked it seven times before the door. This process, known as *frete cache,* was to "wake up" the loa within. The houngan then entered, followed by the client who was seeking help. They paused briefly in the outer room, where the houngan took up his asson and bell and made a small vèvè on the ground. He spoke briefly in *langage* and then passed on through the door to the inner room. There the

houngan took his place before the small altar and the cross surmounted 793
by the skull. Again he spoke *langage* and rattled his asson. He took 755
from the altar a small-necked bottle containing a white alcoholic liquid
and a tight-fitting iron cross. The presence of the iron cross inside the
bottle was represented as a magical phenomenon. The houngan took a
mouthful of the white liquid and sprayed it out in a fine mist over the
skull. Twice more he sprayed the mist, in different directions. Then
he poured a little of the liquid directly on the skull. The room was
filled with the smell of alcohol. The houngan lighted a candle and sat
in a low chair facing the altar. He shook his asson rhythmically and
spoke *langage* to Pinga Maza. Suddenly Pinga Maza entered the houn- 793
gan's head. The houngan became violent. He jerked this way and that, 755
making strange noises in his throat. He seized a machete from the altar, 787
waved it around, and struck the flat of it against his head. He con-
tinued for a while to beat his head fiercely with the machete. Gradually
he became quiet. His assistants placed Pinga's red jacket on him. Now he
spoke in the tired voice of an old man. He complained that he was hungry,
that he had not eaten for a long while. His assistant handed him a [789]
razor blade. He placed it in his mouth, chewed it up, and swallowed it,
washing it down with more of the white liquid in the bottle. He
asked for more, and they gave him a second blade to eat. He demanded
a third, and ate that, too, spitting out small fragments of steel that
caught in his teeth.

His assistant told him there was a man present seeking advice about a pouin. The possessed houngan looked around with half-closed eyes. He asked the man his name, and what he wanted. After hearing the client's story, the houngan took out a deck of cards and placed them one at a time, face up, on a winnowing tray. After studying the cards he said: "You are strong, but not strong enough. You already have some protections, but they do not protect you from the dangers coming your way. You have powerful enemies. You must have a new pouin." The man said yes, he wanted a new pouin, but how much would it cost? Pinga replied through the mouth of the houngan: "Twenty-five dollars." The man said: "I will get the money and return." He went out after placing five gourdes on the winnowing tray with the cards. Pinga became drowsy. The houngan's head fell forward on his chest and he slept. The divining session was ended.

THE WATER ROAD

The land where the loa live, the place "below the water," is not thought 776
of as being in the water itself. It is dry and airy, like the countryside 772
of Haiti. But the route to it is through water.

588 does not marry his horse. People marry people. Loa marry loa. A man
588 may have a compact with a loa. That is not a marriage. Some of the
184 things that are going on down there in the Plain are not right. They
are not the old way. In the old days we did things differently. We
did not always run to the houngan. The grand famille knew how to
talk to the loa. Up here we don't do things the way they do them down
below in the city. People marry people. Loa marry loa."

588 Nevertheless, the practice in the neighborhood of Port-au-Prince and
776 the Cul-de-Sac Plain is for mystic marriages to take place when deemed
[184] useful, essential, or unavoidable. Foremost among the loa involved in
these rites is Ezilie Wèdo, the "pure" one, the deity of love, sometimes
identified with the Virgin Mary. Other loa known to have taken part
in mystic marriages are Damballa, Ogoun, Ayida, Agwé, Gèdé Nimbo
or one of his brothers, Cousin Zaka, and Général Clermeil. All these
loa—significantly, I think—have clearly defined personalities; much is
known about their character and behavior, their likes and dislikes.

588 A man married to Ezilie has special obligations to her for the dura-
tion of his life. On certain days (especially Thursday, which is sacred to
[834] this deity), the mortal "husband" may not have sexual intercourse, even
though he has a human wife.

588 Circumstances leading to a mystic marriage vary widely, but in each
755 case it is a cult priest who determines whether the rites should be
held. Perhaps a person has been afflicted with a series of illnesses or mis-
● 793 fortunes. He goes to his houngan, who begins a series of communica-
776 tions with the client's loa or with his own. Sometimes many loa are
consulted before the desired information is available. Eventually it is
determined that a certain deity, for reasons which may or may not
[753] be clear, wishes to have nuptial ties with the client. The illnesses or mis-
fortunes that have been sent are a means of informing or warning the
[777] person concerned.

Sometimes the houngan relies on well-established divining methods
to ascertain the cause of the difficulties. He may employ the *gembo*
(a shell that slides on a string), ashes, or small shells that are thrown on
[787] the ground. Or he may rely on possession by a loa to provide the in-
formation.

If it is found that a loa is demanding marriage, arrangements are then made. The rites that follow may take place in a hounfor or at the house of the human bride or groom. Both a prêt' savane and a houngan officiate.

588 The person directly involved, like the loa, usually has something to
554 gain from a mystic marriage. For one thing, he can reasonably expect

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588 joined the Protestant Church. Subsequently his wife's illnesses subsided
753 somewhat, but she never bore children. Maurice suspected that the latter
783 misfortune was the result of his spurning his mystic suitor.

588 The actual ceremonies by which a mystic marriage is performed carry
over many of the customs and trappings of ordinary mortal marriages.
● [1793] The prêt' savane reads prayers and officiates until the two parties are
deemed wed. The loa is represented by a "stand-in," usually a person possessed by the loa and dressed in appropriate garb. Gold wedding rings are placed upon the fingers of the couple. There are wedding cakes and wedding contracts. Nothing appropriate to an ordinary wedding is omitted.

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Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ago!
Ou wè Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ouvri bayè!
M'apé rentré quand ma tourné,
Ma salut loa yo!

Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, *ago!*
You see, Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, open the gate!
I will enter when I return,
I salute the loa!

After this appeal, or sometimes while it is being sung, the houngan spills a little water on the earth at the base of the po'teau mitan. It is an inducement for the loa to "enter," for the loa reside "below the water" and their passage into the hounfor is made easier by water. The houngan may spill his water in a long path from the entrance of the peristyle to the po'teau mitan, or extend his pitcher invitingly to the four points of the compass. Then, perhaps, another song is sung to Legba:

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Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Ou même qui porté drapeau,
C'est ou même ka paré soleil pou' loa yo!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
You who carry the flag,
It is you who shade the loa from the sun!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

As the ritual gets under way, there may be a general song of welcome to all the loa of the cult, such as this one:

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Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Oh bonjou' oh bonjou' loa moin! [Ex. 43]

Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Oh, good day, oh, good day my loa!

When the service is well in progress, the songs may describe the qualities of the deities—their character, behavior and needs. If it is Balindjo, for example, the song may advertise that persons with this loa in their heads are immune to poison:

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun oh!

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh, Ogoun, oh!

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Bambarra is walking, low hips!
Bambarra is going to walk, low hips!

Damballa Wèdo, being a snake deity, "threads" or "winds" his way like a serpent, and this song describes a serpentine course taken by the dancers as Damballa (here identified as a Nago man) arrives:

Filé na filé, Damballa Wèdo vini wè moin!
Filé na filé, Nèg' Nago vini wè'm là! [Ex. 74]

Wind, we wind, Damballa Wèdo comes to see me!
Wind, we wind, the Nago man comes to see me here!

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After the dancing has been going on for a long while and the pace is fast, there may be a song of banter, such as the following from the Dahomey rites. The dancers sing *laillé, laillé!*, describing a figure of the dance in which the skirts are swirled, and note that they have worn out the drummers. They even offer to carry on their backs those dancers who are ready to fall by the wayside:

Laillé laillé!
Oh laillé laillé oh viéco'!
Tambouyé bouké!
Tambouyé bouké viéco'!
Laillé laillé oh viéco'!
Laillé laillé tambouyé bouké houngan'm!
M'po'té sou corps moin vié sor!
Tambouyé bouké ça!
Laillé laillé! [Ex. 75]

Laillé laillé!
Oh, *laillé laillé*, oh, old people!
The drummers are tired!
The drummers are tired, old people!
Laillé laillé, oh, old people!
Laillé laillé, the drummers are tired, my *houngan!*
I'll carry you on my back, old sister!
The drummers are tired there!
Laillé laillé!

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Interspersed among the songs of the hounfor there are sometimes warnings or admonitions. Usually they are tangent and indirect in statement, and may be from the point of view of the loa or of the houngan. In the following pouin song, which accompanies the ritual of making magic, there is a warning to certain people who will feel the effects of the magic. The ceremony includes, among other things, the dropping of lemons, roots, and leaves by the houngan into his sacred basin or pond. The houngan sings:

Trois fé trois citron oh! 533
Trois fé trois citron oh! 539
Moin dit rwo, youn jour ou wa besoin moin! 776
Trois fé trois racine oh! 626
Moin dit oui, youn jour ou wa besoin moin! 796
Gainyain bassin moin trois racine tombé ladans, 793
Quand ou wa' blié fau' ramassé chongé! [Ex. 76]

Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
I say *rwo*, one day you are going to need me!
Three leaves, three roots, oh!
I say yes, one day you are going to need me!
I have my pond into which three roots fall,
When you wish to forget you will have to remember!

In another song the houngan warns against ingratitude on the part of persons for whom special magical services have been carried out:

Ouanga ça oh ouanga chaud!
Ouanga ça ouanga chaud!
Lè pou' payé li pinga ou faché!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Lè pou' payé li pinga ou faché! [Ex. 77]

This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!

Somberly and in metaphor, the deity Kitta Démambré speaks of an unhappy event which occurred in the town of Léogane, and warns those concerned that it must not happen again: 533 539 776 626

Kitta Démambré, pinga ou fai'm ça 'core oh!
Nan Léogane ti poule-là mouri nan zé!
Nan Léogane ti poule-là mouri nan zé oh!
Kitta Démambré, pinga ou fai'm ça encore oh! [Ex. 78]

Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again, oh!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again!

An unnamed spirit warns that the moment for placation has come and suggests that calling on him after he has gone from the *pavillon* of the houngan Deréa would be of no use. [782]

791 754 789 days, according to the bocor's prescription. It is also employed to protect an individual against various forms of the ouanga.

757 787 [791] [959] Against poisons, the usual protection is the ***drogue***, prepared by a bocor or a leaf doctor who specializes in such things. After having drunk a drogue, a man is regarded as immune to poison. Should a man be a "horse" of the loa Ogoun Balindjo, however, no drogue is necessary, for Balindjo's people are regarded as immune even without such precautions.

787 [791] Foretelling the future and divination take two general forms. In one variety, a bocor or ***divineur***, using ritual paraphernalia such as cards, flour, or ashes, takes personal responsibility for the divination. In the other form, the divineur functions only when possessed by a loa, and it is the deity himself who foretells and foresees. An account of this kind of divination is given in chapter 6. "Horses" of the loa Mâit' David when possessed are given packs of cards, for they are reputed to be able to divine the future.

789 ●793 Certain houngans use the instrument known as the ***gembo*** as a divining device. This is a small shell about the size of a lemon, through which a long cord is passed. When there is no tension on the cord, the shell can easily be slid back and forth. When the cord is taut, the shell will not slide. The houngan holds one end of the cord under his foot, the other end with his hand above it. He starts his divination with the shell at the top and the cord taut. Shaking his asson with the other hand, he talks ***langage*** and asks questions. To indicate a "yes" answer he relaxes the tension on the cord and the shell slips downward an inch or so. The typical gembo is decorated with beads, old coins, religious medals, snake bones, and a fragment of mirror.

694 787 There are several ceremonies for locating a thief or other guilty person. One is called ***passage d'alliance***. A ring suspended on a string is held over a person's head. If it moves in a regular pendulous way, the person is innocent; but if it swings in a circle, his guilt is established. Another method is the use of a long stick. The stick is pointed at one man, then another, and when the end vibrates in a circular manner the guilty party has been located. This technique is known as ***jugement de baguette***. A third method is the one known as ***passé balai***. A man sits in a low chair and small branches and leaves of the ***balai*** (broom) tree are placed under the chair and fastened to its uprights. A guilty person sitting in this chair will cause the ***balai*** branches to vibrate and close in on him.

759 The role of the ***docteur fé***—the leaf doctor—straddles the field of magic and pharmacology. Many of his potions are of a mystical and

When they are not working, it is said, zombies are tied with special 775
ropes made from the leaves of the banana tree. One popular song goes: 789 824

Nans Léogane [539]
Yo marré zombie nans paille fig-banane!
Abobo wye-oh!

In Léogane
They tie the zombie with banana straw!
That is all, *wye-oh!*

Some Haitians tell you they know there are zombies because they have seen them. Not too many years ago a visiting writer stoutly declared that she, too, knew there were zombies because she had seen one—in the mental hospital at Pont Beudet. Although her reasoning was not quite airtight, the possibility that mental defectives are sometimes mistaken for zombies is worth considering.

Houngans who "work with two hands" are reputed to be able to gain 775
permanent control over persons by means of a formula known as *tuyé-* 793
lèvé (kill and raise). Either for himself or a client, the houngan gains 754
power over the victim by "killing" him through special magic and then 774
"removing the soul" (*retiré n'âme*). The victim, presumed to be normally dead, is buried by his family; the houngan then retrieves the body and "restores the soul" (*metté n'âme*). With his soul restored, the victim has, in effect, become a slave of the houngan, who can do with him as he wishes. He differs from a zombie in that he has a soul, whereas the zombie has none.

Some Haitians believe that even one who has died a nonmagic death 775
may be raised from the dead. To accomplish this, the houngan or bocor 793
stands over the body, goes through a specified ritual, and calls out the 789
dead person's name: "Albert Moreau! Albert Moreau! Albert Moreau! 754
Lèvé non! Lèvé non! Lèvé non!" ("Get up! Get up! Get up!") Then, 791
it is said, the dead man may awaken.

It is believed that a houngan may also command the souls of dead 775
persons to perform services for him against an enemy. The souls at his 754
disposal for this work are those which he keeps in earthern jars in 793
his hounfor. Should he wish to plague an enemy, he will send one of these souls to the man's house to make him sick, or lazy, or insane. Usually, the man does not know what is happening to him; but if he becomes aware that a dead soul is working on him, he attempts to find out which houngan has sent it. Perhaps the houngan can be bought off. If not, another houngan may provide relief.

While some believe in the reality of the various demons and specters, 184
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2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P.112-O]

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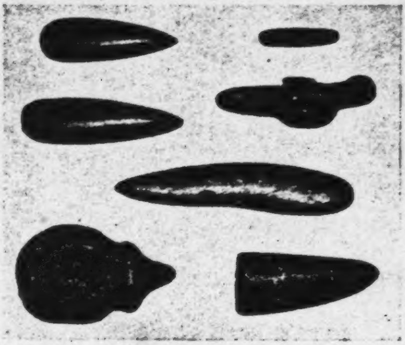
22. *An assortment of stones (Indian artifacts) from the altar of a hounfor in the mountains above Jacmel. All are regarded as thunder stones thrown to earth by the loa Sobo and Kébiosu, or as stones containing the essence of other deities.*



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23. *A houngan of southern Haiti divining with the aid of his asson, bell, and (right) gembo.*

[P. 112-P]

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24. *A houngan of a small cult center in northern Haiti.*

25. *A prêt' savane. This lay cleric reads the scriptures at appropriate times in the Vodoun rituals.*

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353 used for wall hangings much as appliquéd cloths are used in Dahomey.
323 Near Cap Haitien, in the north, ceramic workers make crude clay
532 figurines of roosters, pigs, dogs, cows, and people. The "purpose" of
[184] these figurines is obscure, but it is likely that they are intended for use
[778] in Vodoun ritual, a number of them having been observed in hounfors
in the vicinity of the town of Grande Rivière du Nord. In some mountain
322 villages, canes carved with animal and human heads are commonly
[532] seen. Nor is the tradition of carving gourds and calabashes, popular in
[171] various regions of West Africa, altogether forgotten. The *cayambouque*,
[531] a divided calabash with the top ingeniously cut to fit into the lower part
so as to form a sealed container, is sometimes covered with carved
geometric designs, usually crude and haphazard but on occasion meticulous.
[534] Until recent years the common *cha-cha*, or gourd rattle, was
similarly carved.

322 Most of the visible traditional art is to be found in the environs of
532 the cult temple. The inner walls of many hounfors are covered with
346 ritual designs and symbols and portraits of the deities. On the altar,
778 sometimes, crude wood carvings of deities are seen, along with forged
iron objects, carved marassa bowls, and grotesquely shaped drumsticks known as *baguettes guinée*. All the wooden objects are characterized by a plainness that relegates them to the category of purely functional and expendable things. The wood carving of a deity is not an image, it is a representation; it can be sold or otherwise disposed of, even thrown away if infested with beetles, and another object can be used to replace it. The only concern of the cult priest in this matter is that the deity concerned should understand the situation properly and not take offense. Thus there is no strong feeling that the wood carving should be a realistic representation or that it should be "beautiful." One relatively antique wood carving, completely West African in style, was found some years ago in a hounfor near Léogane and is now in the collection of the Musée du Peuple Haitien in Port-au-Prince (see fig. 57).

788 One of the most flourishing arts of the hounfor is the *vèvè*, or ritual
532 drawing made on the earth in the course of a service. Most commonly
these beautiful and ornate designs are made with white meal or
flour, and in a few of the cults, primarily the Pétro, lampblack and
● [793] red brick dust are also used. The vèvè is made by the houngan or the
mambo. With sure, practiced movements, the cult priest allows the meal to trickle through his fingertips onto the ground where the rites are taking place, usually in the peristyle of the hounfor itself. The drawings he makes are composed of a multiplicity of cabalistic symbols—heart shapes, stars, interlocked V's, flags, abstract phallic forms, crosses, swords,

*533	Mérisier rété Jacmel,	Mérisier waited at Jacmel.
*539	Li souqué baksor à li.	He shook his sacred rattle.
173	Li conné ça qui gainyain.	He knew what was going on.
643	Tout ti trou déjà bouché!	All the small holes were filled.*
	Victoire dit con ça,	Victoire said
	Quand Florvil ta va mourit	When Florvil dies
	Li tap fai youn belle soirée	She will hold a beautiful party
	Avec tout ti gens la yo.	With all the young people.
	CHORUS	CHORUS
	En allé Dodo!	We are going to dance! †
	En allé Dodo!	We are going to dance!
	En allé ce soir	We are going this evening
	Caille la belle Victoire!	To the house of beautiful Victoire! ‡

The legend of Hippolyte's falling hat is preserved in another folk song called "Panama'm Tombé":

Panama'm tombé,	My hat fell down,
Panama'm tombé,	My hat fell down,
Panama'm tombé; ça qui dèyè	My hat fell down; whoever is behind,
Ramaissé li ba moin!	Pick it up for me!

*533 *539 173 643 793 Mérisier, the Vodoun priest whom Hippolyte regarded as an enemy, was not pleased with the rumors and talk about him that was going the rounds in the capital. His displeasure is recorded in a protest song with a familiar theme:

Mérisier yo vini ga'dé moin pou' y'allé pa'lé, wo wa é!
Mérisier yo vini ga'dé ça pou' y'allé pa'lé ça!
Kénan moin yo wè!
Kénan yo séré nan mal!
Mérisier pas là, sonné ochan wa wa é!

Mérisier [says] they come to see me to go away and talk, *wo wa é!*
Mérisier [says] they come to see it and go away to talk about it!
What is mine you see!
What is yours you evilly hide!
Mérisier isn't there, sound the salute, *wa wa é!*

173 643 *533 *539 Seven days after Hippolyte's death, General Simon Sam was elected to the presidency. His friends and his enemies had different things to say about him. One song makes a tart comment on Sam's administration.

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* That is, the affair was finished.

† *Allé dodo* literally means "to go to sleep," but there was a dance called Allé Dodo.

‡ Hippolyte's young wife.

[P.349)

Notes

CHAPTER 1: *The Making of the Haitian* (*pp. 1–7*)

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[1] The name Ganda survives in Haiti as the name of a deity.

[2] Herskovits, in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (p. 47), provides a tabulation of raw data found in the manifests recorded for slaves shipped to Virginia between 1710 and 1769: 20,964 slaves were reported shipped from "Africa," 3,652 from Gambia, 6,777 from "Guinea," 9,224 from Calabar, 3,860 from Angola, and 1,011 from Madagascar. Of those shipped from the island of Madagascar, 473 were listed as coming from Mozambique.

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[3] Bartolomé de Las Casas.

CHAPTER 2: *Man and the Universe: Vodoun* (*pp. 8–18*)

[1] See Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, p. 7.

[2] Schweinfurth in *The Heart of Africa*, II, 31, says: "In Loango all exorcists and conjurors are called *ganga*." Leo Wiener, in *Africa and the Discovery of America* (Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1922), III, 32, reports: "Forms of *ganga* have in Bantu the meaning 'medicine' but also 'magic'—such as Nyika *ganga* and Kongo *nganga*."

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[3] Gorer, *Africa Dances*, p. 129; Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 208 ff.

[4] From the Fon *houn-so* or *houn-si*. Among the Arada of Dahomey a *houn-si* was regarded as a spiritual wife of the deity. She was a servant of the cult temple, and in some instances a wife of the cult priest.

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[5] Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti*, pp. 57–59.

[6] Deren, in her *Divine Horsemen* (pp. 119 ff.), gives an excellent report of a service for Agwé in a boat at sea. Aubin (*op. cit.*, p. 108) seems to have given the first description of this service at sea for the loa Agwé.

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[7] Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 119.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 123. Leyburn advances the theory that Vodoun developed during this period as a result of the vacuum left by the Church. Although the Church did in effect leave the field to the African cults, one must assume that the Arada, Congo, and other cults were already organized and possessed of great vitality before the Haitian revolution. Implicit evidence points to a continuity of cult life from the earliest days of the African on Haitian soil. There are no statistics to reveal the extent of cult membership at the end of the eighteenth century, but the content and form of Vodoun today are so overwhelmingly African that it is difficult to think of Haitian cult activity as the product of a renaissance.

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CHAPTER 3: *The Loa: Gods of the Haitian Mountains* (*pp. 19–29*)

[1] The term *vodoun*, used in this precise sense, conforms to the original Fon (Dahomean) usage. The term *hounail*, also of Fon origin, signifies "spirit" and belongs to the same root

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776 as *hounfor, houmi, houngénicon, hountor,* etc. *Mystère* is of obvious French origin. *Loa*
192 is probably from the Bantu, but it could be from the Yoruba.

[2] Various methods and formulas are employed in "tying" a loa. Sometimes making the sign of the cross is regarded as adequate, or the saying of a prayer. In "The Vodun Service in Northern Haiti" (*American Anthropologist,* XLII, 242–243), George Eaton Simpson reports that the "tying" of a loa sometimes results in a contest between the individual concerned and his houngan. If the houngan wants the *maît' tête* to come in, he must neutralize the ritual barriers the "horse" has put in the way. "One procedure for bringing on possession in a servant who has tried to 'tie' his chief god is for the priest to stand in front of the person whom he suspects, make the sign of the cross, and strike him on the forehead three times with a sacrificial stone. Usually these blows are hard enough to make blood spurt. The servant then begs the pardon of the angry god, and as soon as possible he unties the knots in his handkerchief [the method he has used for 'tying' his loa]."

000 [3] Herskovits, *Dahomey.*

CHAPTER 4: *Death Rites (pp. 30–40)*

775 [1] Maurice Delafosse, *L'Ame nègre.* Translation from *Free France,* special issue No. 4,
171 French Press and Information Service, New York, June, 1945.

113 [2] Leo A. Verwilghen, in booklet describing peoples of the Kwango region, accompanying *Music of the Western Congo,* recordings issued by the Ethnic Folkways Library.

000 [3] Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu,* pp. 88–89.

[171] [4] W. M. Eiselen and I. Schapera, "Religious Beliefs and Practices," in Schapera, *The*
[769] *Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa,* p. 250.

[775] [5] Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti,* p. 212.

[113] [6] Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley,* pp. 213–214.

[7] Hall and others, *Haitian Creole,* American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 54, pp. 188–189.

[8] Simpson, "Four Vodun Ceremonies," *Journal of American Folklore,* April–June, 1946, pp. 155–162.

[9] As translated by Courlander from Simpson's Creole text, *ibid.,* p. 156. The preceding paragraph is from p. 155.

[10] Translated by Courlander from the Creole of Simpson's text.

[11] This and the preceding paragraph are from Simpson, *op. cit.,* p. 156.

[764] [12] These shells, as indicated elsewhere, are part of the paraphernalia of the Vodoun priest
[766] and appear to be an inheritance from the priests of the Fa cult of Dahomey. The divining
[743] shells are usually thrown on the ground in fours, and the readings depend upon combina-
[776] tions of "heads and tails." The manner of throwing the shells, as well as the number used,
[787] corresponds closely with the Haitian secular gambling game *mayamba* (see Appendix 2),
[525] though the purpose is obviously different. In some priestly rites in Haiti, ashes rather than the customary shells are used for divining.

[13] Simpson, *op. cit.,* p. 159.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 161.

[15] Herskovits, *op. cit.,* p. 208.

[764] [16] Herskovits (*ibid.*) notes that persons who die of smallpox, lightning, and certain
[766] other phenomena are not buried in coffins. Some of my informants indicated this to be
[114] their understanding also, but they said that the dead are buried without coffins for strictly economic reasons as well.

[17] Simpson, *op. cit.,* p. 161.

[18] Leyburn, *The Haitian People,* p. 156.

[19] Herskovits, *Dahomey,* I, 398.

[20] *Ibid.,* pp. 393–398.

[21] Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley,* p. 214.

[22] Hall and others, *op. cit.,* p. 173.

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565 caste is the only word to describe the effective separation of aristocrats
from the masses. The caste system is a vivid fact, for it regulates a
person's profession, speech, religion, marriage, family life, politics,
clothes, social mobility—in short, his whole life from cradle to grave.

175 Haiti won its freedom from the France of Napoleon in 1804,
648 becoming thus the second independent state in the Western Hemisphere.
It had been during the eighteenth century France's most
prosperous colony, its wealth depending upon slavery and the plantation
565 system. With the whites driven out, social distinctions which
642 actually had their roots in colonial times began immediately to
develop among the people, all of whom had some proportion of
African blood in their veins. During the course of the next century
the criteria for aristocracy slowly assumed recognizable form, so that
now even the most casual observer is aware that Haiti cannot by any
stretch of the imagination be called a democratic country, with an
open class system. The two castes are the élite and the masses. They
are as different as day from night, as nobleman from peasant; and
[162] they are as separate as oil and water. The élite are generally reckoned
to compose at the outside not more than three per cent of the
population.

565 The élite do not work with their hands. This is the cardinal rule of
Haitian society. Upon it rests the whole economic structure of the
463 country, and to this the course of national history has led. All the
[461] professions, most governmental and military offices, and the large
business enterprises are effectively closed to young men of the masses.
Indeed, so completely accepted are caste rules, so practically difficult
would it be for peasant youths to acquire the money and education
necessary for such careers, that at birth a boy's future place in economic
life is, within narrow limits, already predetermined. For the
élite, law is the most popular of the professions, partly because it is the
quickest avenue of approach to high political office; government, in
turn, is the only career which can make a man rich within a few
years. Next in popularity to law comes medicine. Teaching is not
lucrative enough to attract many promising youths, and the priests of
the Roman Catholic Church are almost all white Frenchmen.[2]

● 793 [2] An effort was once made by the Catholic Church to train native Haitian priests,
but the peasants would have none of them after they were ordained. They drove them
797 out, saying, "Go away! How do you expect God to listen to you? You are not white;
you don't know anything." And the Haitian priests had to be transferred as missionaries to Africa.

trary; they were grudgingly respected as superior beings, arbiters of 175
the fate of the outside world, potential destroyers of the privileges 563
of the Haitian élite should they return to the country in force. 564
Although white men might not legally marry Haitian women, it
was not every woman who could resist the opportunity of having
children lighter than herself. One indication of the ambiguous attitude
toward the whites was seen in religion. In 1842 out of sixty or [193]
seventy Roman Catholic priests in the island, only one was a Haitian.
Many people in the country were well educated, and certainly more
than equals in point of scholarship and *savoir-faire* of the rude priests
imported generally from Corsica. But a feeling was current among
the peasants that "colored baptism will not stick." There is no indication
that the European priests, since they were well paid for their
services, attacked this particular heresy. As for the élite, they derived
a certain satisfaction in being served by white priests. Aside from the
churchmen, however, the only white man in any place of prominence
in the country was the mayor of Saint-Marc, whose father had
befriended Boyer in former times.

Few visitors had kind words to say of social conditions in the 114
Haiti of Boyer. As a Frenchman put it: 175

> Democracy was the rule; but what a democracy! A hodge-podge of the 642
> most heterogeneous ideas, an alliance of the most contrary principles, of
> American federalism with military control; the sovereignty of the people
> replaced by the sovereignty of a ruling clique; and finally, all the intellectual
> vainglory of a people young, inexperienced, and for a long time
> denied the legitimate manifestation of their own wishes. Added to all these
> inconsistencies is the antagonism of races.[61]

This antagonism was, indeed, paramount. The habitual hauteur and 175
assumed pretensions of the lighter Haitians were a perpetual thorn in 563
the flesh of the ambitious blacks, and thus the breach was everywhere
widened and made permanent. The blacks retaliated against these
distinctions by refusing to obey orders from mulattoes in office, or
by petty outrages against private citizens among the colored group.

The vital lack of the country, assuming that stability is desirable, 175
was a middle class of any sort. On the base of hundreds of thousands 565
of peasants, illiterate, unambitious, indifferent to progress, was built 563

[61] Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, "La République d'Haïti; ses dernières révolutions; sa
situation actuelle," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XV, No. 4 (Nov., 1845), pp. 681–682. [113]

INTRODUCTION

If the visitor to Haiti is first struck by the wide separation between the élite and the peasant masses, the person who knows Haiti only through books is sure to think of it as a country of Voodoo. There is no error of fact here, for Voodoo is characteristic of Haiti. Nevertheless, what the American conjures up in his mind when he uses the word is almost certain to be misleading. In spite of detailed reports of anthropologists the average American clings firmly to his notion that Voodoo is Negro superstition chiefly concerned with charms or spells to "hoodoo" (a variation of the same word) an enemy. Scientists rarely succeed in correcting long-held but incorrect or one-sided impressions of the meaning of terms; they end rather by inventing a new word, or else continue the generally losing fight for precise usage, and so preserve the confusion.[1] 771

Since there is small likelihood of eradicating the inexact connotations of "Voodoo," many recent anthropologists have adopted such spellings as Vodun, Vodou, Vodoun, Vaudou, and Vodûn, all renditions of local pronunciation of the same term. *Vodun* (pronounced Vo-doon) has been chosen for use in this work, in the hope that readers will bear in mind that the folk religion is not mere idle superstition. A grasp of the real and distinctive religious beliefs and cult practices of the Haitian is very necessary to an understanding of the social picture. [104]

Like its caste system, the religious life of Haiti presents far-reaching contrasts. The only approved religion of the country is Roman Catholicism. To this faith all the élite who are religiously inclined, or wish to pay formal homage to the institution of religion, belong. No Protestant sect has ever gained a real foothold in Haiti. Catholic churches are among the imposing edifices in every town; Catholic priests are an everyday sight as they go about their parishes; Catholic brothers and sisters, with state support and approval, direct much of the higher education in the country. 771 195 184 [346] [793] [871]

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[1] Witness in anthropology the contrast between the popular and the scholarly meaning of *culture*, *race*, *taboo*, and *fetish*; in chemistry of *reaction* (as when a man is asked his "reaction" to an opinion); in psychology of *instinct*, *innate*, and *inherent*; and in sociology of *caste*, *institution*, and *social*.

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175 material—Frenchmen who lived "in a deplorable state of morals,
771 too often recalling those of the freebooters and buccaneers" who were their ancestors and predecessors. Even when the calibre of the colonists improved, religion was a minor concern, business and pleasure pushing it well into the background.

There was no great antagonism toward the fathers; indeed, not enough attention was paid to the priests and their work to warrant any very strong feeling. It was indifference and insolence the fathers had to face, or, if they showed too great an interest in the welfare of slaves upon a plantation, suspicion and peremptory curbs. By the old
[671] Code Noir under which the colony theoretically operated, masters were obligated to send their slaves to Mass on Sundays and feast days under penalty of heavy fines; the Code likewise prescribed the baptism of all blacks and their instruction in the Catholic faith. But just as the colonists ignored all parts of the Code antagonistic to their own economic interests, so specifically did they disregard the sections dealing with their religious obligations.

175 Some priests were in any case not too zealous. It was much more
agreeable to attend only to external forms, and so participate in the
● 793 charming life of high society, than to stand firm against laxity. If a
662 priest showed enthusiasm for his duties to his African charges he was
567 almost-certain to be accused by the planters of stirring up the slaves
[792] and undermining the foundations of colonial society. This was, in
fact, the very accusation leveled at the Jesuits to bring about their expulsion from the colony in 1764. The example was not lost upon other priests.

175 "The safety of the whites demands that the Negroes be kept in
771 profound ignorance," said one of the later governors in a message to
563 France. This sentiment, perfectly expressing the conviction of the majority of planters, not only prevented any secular education of the blacks, but actually kept many of them from instruction in catechism, creed, or any part of the Catholic faith. If instruction is forbidden, few of the sacraments can be administered, for how can a person be confirmed, confess, do penance, if he know not even the first principles of the faith. Few masters objected to the baptism of slave children; on the other hand, they roundly disapproved of the sacrament of marriage for their blacks, since this might place an obstacle in the way of slave sales, and even open the way for assimilation of blacks and whites in the colony.

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Granted these obvious difficulties, there is still little to be said for 175
the zeal or integrity of churchmen in Saint-Domingue. Father Cabon 193
cites a report to Rome in 1794, which, he remarks, "was not de-
signed to be made public, and does not bear the earmarks of passion," 192
and which flatly states that "since the expulsion of the Jesuits, the
curés have for the most part led lives so indecent . . . that the citizens
and Negroes have lost all the sentiments of religion which the Jesuits
gave them."[3] There had been distinguished churchmen in Saint-
Domingue before 1750, authors, scientists, teachers of some note, but
none appeared thereafter. The rich French colony was not a bright
star in the Catholic crown.

Undeterred by those who might have been their spiritual guides, 175
the white people followed the easy path of self-indulgence. The 556
universal testimony of visitors is that, with a few notable exceptions, 185
immorality and cruelty were daily commonplaces. To make a 647
fortune was the prime ambition of every white man, since money 661
made possible the luxurious enjoyment of this world's goods. Protest 693
against money-making or soft living would have been futile. Ad- 466
ministrative agents turned public office to their own profit; judges 193
sold justice to the highest bidder; planters drove their slaves to death;
and priests dispensed religious solace for a tidy sum.

The freedmen, who in everything patterned their lives after social 175
leaders in the white planter class, had no more concern for religion 771
than their models. They attended Mass occasionally as a social event, 184
where they might see and be seen. When in the latter days of the colony discriminatory legislation required that colored persons sit in separate parts of the church, most of the affranchis simply refrained from attending Mass: their religious zeal was not so great as to make them submit to the public shame of segregation. In their daily lives, likewise, they followed the example of the white planters in pursuing pleasure rather than sobriety, "culture" rather than religious zeal. Like the whites, they were often licentious in their conduct. When it came their turn to direct affairs of state in free Haiti, there was little interest in spiritual matters among them. The intellectuals of the group paid homage to the liberal philosophers of the century rather than to religious thinkers.

If religion was at a low ebb in the prosperous days of the colony, 175
it almost disappeared in the excitement of the years following the 771

[3] Ibid., p. 33. revolt of the slaves(1791).

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to appoint, curés to the vacant parishes. His independence of action 643
could not fail to give offense to Church authorities. One of his first 659
appointees was a black ex-slave, Félix, who had been a drum major 795
in the native army. Félix was made curé in the important town of [793]
Saint-Marc.

The constitution of his empire (May, 1805) indicates that Des-
salines did not intend to make himself head of the Church, but rather 175
planned a complete separation of Church and State. Article 50 reads: 795
"The law admits no dominant religion"; while the next article 642
grants freedom to all cults and refuses state support to any denomina- 659
tion or minister. No attack was made, therefore, upon Catholicism,
yet the disestablishment of that Church was a serious blow to its
prestige. Not in the specific provisions regarding religion was the
Church most weakened, but rather in the "liberality" of articles
dealing with actions upon which the Church had taken a firm moral
stand. Thus Article 14 declared that "marriage is an act purely civil [582]
and authorized by the government," while Article 15 permits
divorce by the state. Early laws of the empire still further under- [586]
mined the position of Church doctrine. Illegitimate children were [848]
granted the same legal rights as legitimate ones—a generous provi-
sion which removed one of the strong reasons for marriage; separa-
tion of husband and wife except by divorce was forbidden, and this
prohibition practically encouraged the divorce disapproved by the
Church; finally, the grounds upon which divorce might be allowed
were broader than those existing anywhere else in the Western
World at the time: mutual consent, application from one party to
the marriage, or simple allegation of incompatibility of tempera-
ment or character.

From the promulgation of this constitution in 1805 and for the 175
next fifty-five years, Haiti was in open schism from the Roman 795
Catholic Church. The Holy See refused to recognize either the
Haitian state or the provisions of its constitution, and it declined to 648
allow priests to enter the country. Certain Haitian presidents were 771
friendly enough to Catholicism, and others were openly desirous 178
of reëstablishing a state religion, but the breach once made was not
healed by mere good wishes. The longer the schism endured, the
farther the people grew away from the doctrines and practices of a
religion in which they had never been firmly grounded. At the
moment of independence, when all minds were more open to new

Christophe had a great deal more to say about religion than any of 175
the other early Haitian rulers. In a speech following the promulgation 643
of his constitution, after severe censure of the government of 795
Dessalines, he said: 659

> It is necessary to raise again the dignity of religion, for weakened morals 642
> leave young people open to the licenses of their age. Liberty has been assailed by traitors, enemies of their fellow citizens, and sold to our cruelest enemies. It is assured to you now, have no doubt! Shortly you will see these vicious men and their criminal efforts vanish like clouds.
>
> Public education, after religion and liberty the most precious benefit [871]
> mankind enjoys, will be reanimated and sustained by morality; it will [586]
> again be held in honor and reverence amongst us. Divorce, that traitor among customs, is rigorously prohibited and proscribed forever.[5]

Like Pétion, Christophe made the Catholic Church official, but he indicated the dictatorial path he intended to follow by adding that no ecclesiastical decree or law might become effective without the
consent of the President.[6] He completely overturned the law of [848]
Dessalines concerning illegitimate children; his decree deprived such offspring of any claims of inheritance whatever.[7] In a country where practically no one had been legally married such a ruling was severe, but Christophe hoped that his severity would force his subjects into wedlock, and this the Catholic Church was bound to approve.

Making the Church official did not strengthen its hold upon the 175
people. In 1814 (seven years after he had promised "to raise again 795
the dignity of religion") the kingdom was served by only three 793
priests, one of whom Christophe had named archbishop. The King
was preoccupied with form, and having created a nobility he needed 659
a church to lend dignity to his realm. Consequently in 1811 he reorganized 648
the clergy in his kingdom, establishing an archiepiscopal see and three bishoprics. The reorganization, except for the archbishop, remained a paper plan because the Pope refused to coöperate by giving the schismatic church his approval.

All the early rulers seem to have been rather innocent in their dealings with Rome. They felt, apparently, that as heads of state they had but to express a desire in order to have His Holiness ap-

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[5] This speech, made on February 18, 1807, is cited in Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince, 1848), II, 354–355.

[6] See the law of March 18, 1807.

[7] Law of March 25, 1807.

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prove. Dessalines had sent a small number of Negro youths to Rome to receive consecration and ordination from the Pope, so that they might return to initiate a black priesthood for the black state. Pius VII (through the interference of Napoleon, it was held by the Haitians) refused to consecrate the aspirants to holy orders, and they had to return as they had come. Christophe thought to avoid such a snub by presenting His Holiness with a *fait accompli*. Having in his kingdom a Spanish Capuchin named Brelle who had formerly anointed Dessalines emperor, Christophe made this friar head of his reorganized church as "archbishop of Haiti and grand almoner to the King," giving him a "palace" and a yearly income derived from the revenues of his "see." This achieved he asked papal approval, but had sorrowfully to announce, "*Le roi d'Haïti eut la douleur de ne pas même recevoir une réponse de Sa Sainteté et passa outre.*"

Pétion's legislators were even more naïve. Their constitution of 1816 (of course, really the President's) granted to the President the right to have a bishop come to Port-au-Prince "to elevate to the priesthood those young Haitians who feel called to embrace the ecclesiastical state."[8] It was apparently assumed that without the approval of the Pope any bishop could come in and forthwith "make" priests. The insertion of this article in the constitution confesses the disadvantages of schism. The last surviving priests of the old régime, those few who had remained in spite of the breach with Rome, were dying off; no new priests were being sent in; therefore, if the Catholic Church was to endure in the republic, it must have Haitian priests. Certain clerics fleeing political revolutions in South America came to Haiti, but since they spoke French badly, did not improve the religious situation. It was impossible to get sympathetic priests from France, in view of the relations of the two countries at the time. The provision of the 1816 constitution, however childish, was at least an effort to perpetuate the church in Haiti.

It is nowhere recorded that either Pétion or Boyer had any opportunity to persuade a bishop to come and consecrate the desired priests. Deprived of support by the Papal See, in open schism, the Haitian republic was forced to make all regulations governing religious affairs. Boyer carried on various negotiations with Rome looking toward rapprochement, but the schism endured. Organized

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[8] Article 50 of the 1816 constitution.

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Organized

religion was never at a lower ebb in Haiti than toward the middle of 175
the nineteenth century, as whole generations of citizens were growing 795
up who had never known the proper forms of ritual, and had no 771
real religious training. The outward shell of the Church covered steadily more "superstition," more homely beliefs and practices, and the long divorce from Rome permitted the growth of a native religion which later could not be eradicated, no matter how assiduous the labors of Catholic priests.

During Boyer's quarter-century the once Roman and Catholic 175
Church remained the official religion of the state, but its head was 195
now the President. Organization simplified as orthodoxy declined. 171
By 1840 there was only one order of priesthood; no archbishop, 659
bishops, canons, curés, or other titled dignitaries, but only "priests." 643
The people were not taxed to maintain the state Church; there were no tithes or forced contributions for the support of public worship or the repair of parish churches, no heavy list of clergy living from levies on the people. However, if the Haitians were not burdened by imposed religious fees, they were still through their own fears subject to steady tolls for services by the degraded men who then called themselves priests.

Every effort of the state failing to provide proper religious leader- 175
ship, Boyer resigned himself to permitting those who professed to 795
be priests to practice in the republic. There were seventy so-called 793
priests in the country in 1840. Some of them had once been in holy orders but were now unfrocked: they found in Haiti not only a haven but a fertile field for gain. In addition to these religious renegades came adventurers who knew just enough of ritual and theology to use the priestly garb as a cover for easy graft. Both groups encouraged crude superstition with a view to making money. They baptized houses, boats, and doorposts, and blessed fetish charms or amulets, all for a fee. Immorality was flagrant, and many of the "priests" had mistresses and children. The debauchery of some was so notorious that Secretary-General Inginac had publicly to
rebuke them and even to banish a few from the country. A visiting [114]
Quaker, benignantly tolerant of most of what he saw in Haiti, was scandalized by the religious situation. He said that the sole aim of most of the clergy was to secure gold and silver "as quickly as they can, to send to Europe for investment." Excepting a very few (notably the priests at Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, and Jacmel), h

175 concludes: "With regard to the ecclesiastical institutions of the
793 republic we may safely say . . . that if the standing army be one cause
795 of the degradation of the people, the Church is surely another; and
[114] the sooner it can be reformed, the better for religion, for morals, and
for the physical well-being of the community."[9]

175 Eventually the state felt it necessary to protect the people from
793 these predatory priests. True, people paid for what they considered to be services performed, but the legislators could not permit un-
795 limited graft in the name of religion. An act of 1840,[10] therefore, set
659 a fee of half a dollar for each baptism;[11] $8 for a marriage with Mass, $4 for one without a Mass; an ordinary Mass, 37 cents; a High Mass, service, or funeral "of the first class" (that is, with choir, sacristan, acolytes, and churchwarden), $60; funerals of the second class, $20; funerals of the third class, $10. Articles of the act specify what shall constitute the three classes of service, and it is then stated, "Neither rectors nor vicars shall receive anything for offices at which they do not assist in person, except in cases of illness." The Haitians were not receiving true religious instruction, but at least their government tried to prevent their being mulcted by the spurious churchmen.

175 Since Haiti had no schools except the few attended by children of
the élite, religious instruction of youth was almost nonexistent. The
771 average élite man was openly an unbeliever, for it required little
184 acumen to show him that if the priests represented religion there was nothing to commend it. Hunt in 1860 said: "Many of the educated are about where the French were when they left the island. They believe in Voltaire, whom I have not unfrequently heard them
[562] characterize as the greatest man who ever lived."[12] In contrast to the
[114] men, the women made more of a show of being devout and attentive to the formal duties of religion, but according to Franklin they

> are not actuated by any religious feeling. Going to church is a mere matter of parade with them, the sabbath being a day of festivities, and not set aside for religious devotion. The female congregations which frequent the churches in Hayti appear better prepared for an opera, or some other public amusement, than for the sacred duties of offering up their prayers in adoration of the Deity.

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[9] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 98 ff.

[10] Chap. IV, articles 28–31.

[11] The figures cited in the Act are in gourdes.

[12] Benjamin S. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans* (Philadelphia, 1860), p. 18.

175 religious life were not improved and the schism endured. The arch-
795 bishop of Haiti seemed to regard his new title as applying vaguely to
648 the island, not the country, of Haiti, and since all his vicars were
659 Spaniards unable to speak either French or the Créole dialect, they
643 did nothing for religion in the Haitian republic.

[793] Ties broken by a single radical action may require endless patience and persistence to knit together their severed threads. The impetuosity of Dessalines caused the rupture; it was prolonged by indifference to religion, absorption in economic and political matters, fear that France might use to her profit any *rapprochement* with Rome, and a certain complacency in subordinating Church to state. Inertia, however, was the real obstacle in the way of healing the breach. It is much less trouble to let conditions remain as they are than to make a change whose results no one can foretell. But the longer the rupture, the less understanding the people had of steps necessary to reëstablish the Church.

175 When in 1847 Faustin Soulouque, the ignorant, became president,
771 the horizon had never seemed darker for organized religion. The
black general, suddenly impelled by a quirk of fortune into high office, was a man of the people in his religious attitudes. All their belief in magic, in the mystical power of certain rites, in charms and spells—all their "superstition" as the Catholics called it—Soulouque shared. For the first time in Haitian history one is aware that the folk beliefs brought over from Africa had become welded into a recognizable form, under the name of Vodun. To colonial writers "Vaudoux" had been primarily a name for certain dances; to the early Haitian élite it seems to have connoted either occult rites or vulgar claptrap compounded of gibberish, old wives' remedies, and sensual dances. But in the long and deepening twilight of Catholicism, the various elements were fused, until by Soulouque's time the Haitian was familiar with the general beliefs, rites, and "priesthood" of Vodun. As Soulouque had broken with the tradition of presidents who wished Haiti to be recognized as one of the community of civilized Western nations, so he allowed the traditional respect for Catholicism to die. As an emperor he was a transplanted African chief; as a believer he was a follower of Vodun. The rites were practiced and the sacrifices made openly now. Men in high places dared to reveal their belief in native tenets. For twelve years Vodun flourished with official approval.

175
795 to try to renovate the old. Gradually the work became established,
346 increasing in scope with the years.

It is not necessary to present a detailed history of the work of
175 Catholicism in Haiti since 1860. The most striking feature of these
795 years is its relationship to Vodun, which will be treated shortly.
The progress made by the Church itself can best be seen by a
794 summary of conditions in 1930.

795 Haiti is divided into dioceses named after its principal towns and
162 cities. The population statistics are based upon figures of births covering more than fifty years, and although estimates, they are probably as accurate as any other population statistics for Haiti:

Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince	942,700
Diocese of Cap-Haïtien	453,000
Diocese of Les Cayes	628,000
Diocese of Gonaïves	475,000
Diocese of Port-de-Paix	153,590
Total	2,652,290

● 793 To care for this large and predominantly illiterate population there are 205 priests,[14] only 8 of whom are Haitians; 105 Brothers; and 366 Sisters.[15] The assiduous educational work of these *religieux* will be discussed in another connection.

794 The country's 10,200 square miles are divided into 112 parishes,
which generally correspond to the political communes, although
162 there are several parishes in the larger centres of population. In the rural sections 465 mission chapels are located at strategic points.[16]

550 Any casual attempt to assess the importance of religion in the daily

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[794] [14] Of these, 156 are in charge of parishes or missions (the secular priests). The remaining 49 are regular clergy (that is, belonging to a religious or monastic order). All parishes in the diocese of Port-de-Paix and two in Port-au-Prince are in charge of the regular clergy; the other regular monks are doing educational work or other special service connected with the dioceses.

[793]
[792] [15] The Brothers are Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne; of the number 83 are French, 10 French Canadian, 9 Spanish, and 3 Haitian. The Sisters belong to three congregations: 146 to St. Joseph de Cluny, 198 to Les Filles de la Sagesse, and 22 to Les Filles de Marie.

[16] All the figures cited above are drawn from the *Report of the Forbes Commission to Haiti*, 1930, pp. 16–17.

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Any casual attempt to assess the importance of religion in the daily

lives of the people is sure to prove erroneous, for in no phase of life 771
are outward appearances so deceptive. What the unsophisticated 184
peasant believes can be ascertained on the whole more accurately
than the beliefs of the intelligent élite. To the foreign observer,
Roman Catholicism seems to play as large and as small a part in the
thinking of the Haitian upper classes as among members of upper-class
French society. Outwardly, the élite are professing Catholics
or not religious at all. It is considered proper to attend Mass and [554]
otherwise to pay respect to religious forms; actually one loses nothing [558]
in prestige if he is not a practicing Christian. Society seems to
exert no pressure in the matter. Only if a member of the upper class
fears for the security of his social position, or knows that rumors are
afloat of his addiction to Vodun, does he feel impelled to become
assiduous in his open attentions to the Church.

The national sensitiveness to skin color is apparent in the priestly 793
complexions. Since the old tradition lingers that "baptism by a black 829
will not stick," not even the peasants welcome native Catholic 563
priests. The God and saints of Christianity need the intercession of
white men, just as the Vodun spirits need that of natives. In the early
days peasants stoned Negro priests who tried to administer the
Catholic sacraments. Such an attitude toward a black clergy falls in
well with the preferences of the élite. If there were Haitian priests,
they would probably be drawn from the élite class since this is the
educated group; but it might happen that some devout peasant
would rise to the priesthood and so have the care of a parish including
élite—a contingency unthinkable to the aristocrat. Snobbishness, 796
indeed, affects the usefulness of the town priests, for the élite members 191
of the congregation insist on having sermons in French, a
language which only the small minority understand, rather than in
the Créole which is the speech of everyone, intelligible to gentry and
humble alike. The Mass is consequently celebrated for the people at
large in unknown tongues, Latin for the ritual, French for the sermon;
the benefit they derive from it must be wholly from their
inner communion stimulated by the actions of the service. The town 793
priests are often willing enough to accede to élite pressure in the matter 191
of language, for they know French as their mother tongue and 796
would have to learn Créole; although some of the more devoted
priests become adept in native speech, using it in their personal

793 ministry and in sermons in country chapels.[17] For the élite, well
191 groomed, sitting with his missal in a seat bearing his name plate, the
796 psychic elation to be derived from hearing a sermon preached in a
language which the rabble seated around him does not know must
[829] be very great—and very Christian.

793 [17] I have heard a sermon in the chapel at fashionable Kenscoff preached in Créole,
191 with the President of the republic, himself a master—and a politically astute user—of Créole in the congregation. Likewise, I have met priests who, although they have lived in the country for a generation, have never learned the tongue used by ninety-five out of a hundred of their parishioners all the time, and by a hundred per cent of them some of the time.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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learn the properties of plants, both for healing and for poison. Except 771
for the belief in spiritual beings, this folk knowledge would hardly 171
have been classed as religious, for it was useful in every phase of daily 174
life; the classification is that of the anthropologist, not of the simple
black.

If Dahomean beliefs prevailed over others of African origin, it was
chiefly because of the numerical preponderance of Dahomeans in the
colony, together with the popularity of their religious dances. The [776]
Dahomean spirits or gods were Vodun; the dance in which the [796]
worshiper sought the inspiration of the spirits was a Vodun dance. [535]
Like all but the highly organized religions, this one recognized the
validity of other beliefs. Its practitioners were not bigots. No
hierarchy existed to keep out new accretions. Imperceptibly these
were added to the original basic form: here an Arada spirit, there a
Congolese prayer, and in many instances a Catholic saint, until the
composite Vodun religion began to take shape.

There is no evidence that during colonial times Vodun was ever 174
considered important by the white ruling class—certainly not as a 535
faith. To most planters the word was the name for a vigorous dance. 796
Judging from Moreau de Saint-Méry's description it was held openly [192]
enough, at times being witnessed by the whites as a sort of nocturnal [114]
diversion. Moreau knew, as did other whites, that there were
"superstitious beliefs" connected with it, yet the offhand use of the
word "superstition" was indication enough that the beliefs were not
regarded as important. We have seen, however, what profitable use
the slaves were able to make of the apparent innocence of their 175
dances. When the idea of revolt began to germinate among them, 669
gathering on each plantation at least once a week they had ample 567
opportunity to hatch their plans. It is known that the campaign for 202
revolt was developed partly under the stimulus of the Negro 793
Boukman, a *houngan* or priest of Vodun. By means of drumbeats, 771
which to the whites merely pounded out the rhythm for dancing
but had for centuries been a means of communication at long distance
in parts of West Africa, that ripening plot was telegraphed from one
plantation to another. Even more important, perhaps, was the unity
of feeling made possible, despite all incoherence of tradition and
language, by the Vodun background. 114

The revolt of half a million slaves was a success. This fact has been 175
rather too calmly accepted by historians of Saint-Domingue, who 669
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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

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175 have explained it chiefly by the surprise element of the uprising. But
669 when else in modern history have slaves successfully revolted against
668 their armed masters and become permanently free? Successful revolutions
even of people not in bodily slavery have had acknowledged
leadership, whereas in Haiti no real leader appeared for the insurgents.
Boukman's influence, indeed, at its widest never reached beyond a
part of the northern plain; he had about the same range of power as a
[793] ward boss in the United States. On the plantations Hallaou, Hyacinthe,
Lafortune, and others whose names are unimportant or unknown,
Vodun houngans likewise welded slave opinion within their
narrow districts. But no single great leader appeared. As the conflict
was developed, without plan or unity under the divided and contradictory
action of numerous blacks, what held the people together
was, negatively, their hatred of the white masters; positively, their
Vodun beliefs. Only later in the decade did a true leader, Toussaint
L'Ouverture, emerge to consolidate their victory.

776 As often happens among unsophisticated people convinced of the
793 rightness of their cause, the local Vodun leaders were sure of their
761 own invulnerability through the protection of one or another of the
782 spirits.[8] They convinced their followers as well, to such a degree that
781 when an invulnerable chief fell there were dozens of reasons to
explain the unexpected death rather than any disillusion. Usually,
failure to follow the rigorous propitiation requirements of the protecting
god offered the key to the misfortune. Various ones of them
were known to be exacting and troublesome. The leader at Trou-Coffi,
Romaine by name, had absorbed enough of the Roman
Catholicism in Vodun to feel that the Virgin Mary was his especial
[789] patroness.[9] Beyond this specific belief in invulnerability was the
general trust that Vodun spirits would lead their devotees to success,
would give them a happy issue out of all their distress.

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[171] [781] [8] A parallel case of belief in invulnerability because of divine protection was that of the North American Indians both at the time of Tecumseh and later in the Sioux outbreaks at the climax of the Ghost-Dance Religion. See James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1892–93 [Washington, 1896]), chap. X.

[114] [781] [9] The importance of Vodun beliefs in connection with the slave revolt is stressed by Dr. J.-C. Dorsainvil, *Vodou et Névrose* (Port-au-Prince, 1931), pp. 33–34. He says of many of the chiefs: "The belief in their invulnerability was not at all the result of calculation, but was a true state of mind, a sort of autosuggestion which explains very well the chronic heroism of certain leaders of the revolution in Saint-Domingue and of the war of independence of 1802–3."

Worship of the loa is directed by priests and priestesses. They grow into their positions by a kind of tolerant apprenticeship. Young men and women discover their abilities in dealing with loa or their desire to participate actively in serving them; they assist the officiating priests; they listen carefully to the lore of their elders, keeping their eyes open meanwhile. The priest is generally called a houngan, or sometimes a *papaloi;* the priestess a *mambu* or a *mamaloi.*[33] No ceremony marks the progression of a novice through any set stages to final priesthood; rather, the people in the community simply recognize growing expertness. The more effective and capable a houngan, the greater his prestige and the wider his reputation. There is nothing even vaguely resembling the ordered hierarchy of priests in the Catholic Church, nor is there any control of one houngan over another. No holy robes adorn the officiants, although they occasionally wear certain colors or ornaments to please the loa. Most of the Vodun priests and priestesses are simple peasants, working in the fields and going about the daily round of life. When they are called to perform a ritual, an offering is taken up in the early part of the service to recompense them for their offices. 793 [192]

Actually, the Vodun houngan and mambu correspond much more closely to the primitive medicine man or shaman than to the Catholic priest. They are thought to have power, through certain Rada and Pétro loa, to cure illnesses caused either by adverse magic of one's enemies or by a loa; they are not able, however, to cure sickness sent by the Christian God. Likewise they can remedy or avert misfortune whose origin is magic or the loa. One of their highly important functions is foretelling the future: no important service would be contemplated by a family without previous resort to divination to determine the propitiousness of the time, nor would it be sensible to undertake a secular business of importance without preliminary reassurance by this means. To see into the future effectively, the priest must be possessed by the loa.[34] 793 755 787

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[33] The second of these names in each case derives from "papa" and "mama," or master and mistress; and from the familiar loa or god. It is not implied that the officiants dominate the loa but only that they deal expertly with them. [192]

[34] In addition to the houngans and mambu, there are also *bocors* who specialize in magic without conducting regular religious rites. These bocors probably deserve the name of sorcerers. [791]

4. *Magic*

771 It is difficult enough to make a distinction between religion and superstition; it is practically impossible, in dealing with a people who in their closeness to nature are not accustomed to the refinements of "civilized" thinking, to make one between magic and certain aspects of religion. Underlying both is belief in the supernatural; characteristic of both is a faith which recognizes a higher order of cause and effect operating with the lower one familiar in commonplace matters. Anthropologists hold various theories about magic, some saying that it is the set of practices out of which religion evolved, others that it exists for personal and practical ends and has little to do with religion; still others that it is a development out of religion, paralleling and complementing it.[35]

771 789 782 One element which distinguishes religious practice from magic is the attitude toward spirits. In religion, the worshiper pays homage and humbly petitions, preserving meanwhile an attitude of humility to spirits or gods who must be propitiated; in magic, the human being, by coërcive words and actions, commands the services of spirits who (if the magical rites have been properly performed) must obey. The distinction is not between good and evil, for a god may have both characteristics and be entirely capable of working harm to mortals. As already noted, in the Haitian system the gods are like men in being mixtures of both principles.

771 789 796 Another difference between religion and magic concerns time. Religion is social, open to all worshipers or at least to all of a group or social rank. Its rites are continually and repeatedly performed. Magic, on the contrary, though sometimes public and social, is generally private and, since it is for a specific purpose, is performed only when the need arises. A man who was thoroughly conversant with magic might go through his whole life without ever feeling the need of employing it or having to exert himself to fend it off. One turns to magic as a sophisticated man might turn to medicine. Either may be done without; both may be used to excess.

789 In Haitian Vodun, magic interweaves itself with the general faith.

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[35] See, for example, Ruth Benedict, "Magic," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, X, 39–44; A. Goldenweiser, *Early Civilization* (New York, 1922), chaps. X–XI; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1907–15), *passim*; R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (New York, 1914), *passim*; and Sumner and Keller, *op. cit.*, II, chaps. XXIX–XXXI.

Everyone believes in it, though few would make nice distinctions 789
between the two. Starting with extremes, the houngan conducting a 793
service with sacrifice is officiating at a purely religious rite, while the 791
bocor (sorcerer) concocting a love charm is dealing wholly in magic. It is perfectly proper, however, for a respectable houngan to brew a mixture, calling on the loa meanwhile for assistance, to cure a sick person: is this magic? Certainly it is private, specific, practical. A respectable houngan will not permit himself to dabble in evil magic, destined to bring misfortune to someone else;[36] but such work is the stock in trade of the bocor, who knows the dangers of his profession yet is willing to run the risk for the sake of high profit. Between the reputable houngan and the awesome bocor may sometimes be found the *caplata*, a sort of jack-of-all-trades, who professes to be able to achieve whatever is demanded of him in magic, whether beneficial or harmful, but whose reputation is not high enough to make men trust him with important magical enterprises.

There exists one continual check to save the gullible from charla- 789
tanism on the part of the practitioner: the performer of any kind of 791
magic must make frequent exhibitions of his powers. If the specialist cannot make his magic work, he soon loses his reputation. The career of magic is not one to be entered lightly. Constant search for medicinal plants, constant experimentation, comparison of practice—the requirements of the profession are as strenuous as those for the successful American doctor. Magic is like a live wire: it cannot be handled with impunity. The slightest slip on the part of the bocor might loose divine wrath on the bungler and quack. It is said that almost every bocor dies an evil death, hoist on his own petard. For the houngan the risk is not so great, since in general he relies upon the might of his own special loa, who of old has been familiar with him. True, he may run the risk of purchasing the services of other loa, but it is a risk, since his family loa, quick to feel insult, might punish him.

Magic runs the gamut from passive to active, simple to complex. 789
The commonest manifestation of magic in Haitian daily life is one
familiar to most peoples in the world—the charm. As in Italy and [171]
other southern European countries, the Haitian peasant believes in the evil eye. "Maldioque," it is called—a term not far removed from the Italian "*mal occhio.*" The common belief is that certain persons,

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[36] This is commonly called "black" magic.

Similarly, in Haitian towns, where the élite -

speak French

197 191 193 and where French is taught in the schools, the Créole is less "pure" than in the untutored countryside. Even there the language is changing, for there is steadily operating that "law of simplification" which reduces the complications of language when it has only an oral tradition.[12] Abridgment occurs more and more frequently, agglutination is more apparent, and words tend toward the monosyllabic.

191 197 Everyone in Haiti speaks and understands Créole. Nursemaids teach it to their élite charges, so that children know it from infancy; élite lovers lapse into its expressive phrases in order to say something particularly intimate which might sound sentimental in French; priests must use it in their parish work if they are to be understood at all. Even the élite presidents have found it wise to speak often to the countrypeople in their own tongue. The gendarmes would be helpless in their police work without it, as would the agricultural, health, and other governmental services. It is the language in which all the small business of Haiti is conducted.[13] Ernest Douyon has written brilliantly and revealingly about it:

> If, on the one hand, we have a business language, an official tongue, which is French, our true maternal language, on the other hand, that one which we first lisp, that of the country as a whole (I had almost said "of the true country," for such is the case), that of the city people as well as of countryfolk, that of all families whatever their differences in education, the language one hears not only in humble huts but in luxurious villas, not only in offices or among the masses but also in private apartments and salons, that which for the crudest as for the most finely cultivated minds (even when these latter through snobbery try to deny the fact) is at all times the most naturally expressive, that which perfectly translates our deepest sentiments (jubilation, anger, love, or whatever) precisely when these are most strongly felt, that which all of us, all (with the rarest exceptions) use spontaneously—is Créole! I know that it is not considered proper in polite society, that it sometimes lends a certain impression of vulgarity, that it is not the correct language for distinguished people—when they are in public! But who is the man of propriety, who the society woman, who in private does not continually use Créole?[14]

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[12] See P. Crouzet, *Les Patois romains* (Toulouse, 1929), p. 18.

[796] [793] [13] It must be noted that in the Vodun service the houngan sometimes speaks in langage, which is not Créole. It purports to be pure African, but is more likely to be mere gibberish.

[14] In his Preface to Faine, op. cit., p. v.